

PAINTING IN RENAISSANCE SIENA



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SIENA



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SIENA
1420–1500

KEITH CHRISTIANSEN

LAURENCE B. KANTER

CARL BRANDON STREHLKE

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

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POPE-HENNESSY
ON
HIS
75TH
BIRTHDAY

CONTENTS

Foreword by *Philippe de Montebello* ix

Acknowledgments xi

Lenders to the Exhibition xiii

PAINTING IN RENAISSANCE SIENA by *Keith Christiansen* 3

ART AND CULTURE IN RENAISSANCE SIENA by *Carl Brandon Strehlke* 33

THE CATALOGUE

Sassetta	63
Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio	91
Master of the Osservanza	99
Unknown Sienese Painter	137
Sano di Pietro	138
Giovanni di Paolo	168
Pellegrino di Mariano	243
Domenico di Bartolo	249
Vecchietta	258
Giovanni di Pietro	264
Matteo di Giovanni	270
Guidoccio Cozzarelli	282
Girolamo da Cremona	286
Liberale da Verona	291
Benvenuto di Giovanni	300
Francesco di Giorgio	316
Neroccio de'Landi	328
Pietro Orioli	335
Luca Signorelli	340
Master of the Griselda Legend	344
Pietro di Domenico	345
Bernardino Fungai	352

Bibliography 361

Index 371

Photograph Credits 385

FOREWORD

Not since "Pictures of the School of Siena," organized by The Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, in 1904, has an exhibition of this magnitude devoted to Sienese painting been attempted outside Siena. Deserving of some explanation, however, is the decision to concentrate exclusively on painting of the fifteenth century. It is universally acknowledged that Duccio, Simone Martini, and Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti are among the greatest masters of European painting, innovators who altered the course of Western art. Yet, none survived the Black Death of 1348, which carried off between one-half and two-thirds of the population of Siena—until then one of the largest and wealthiest cities in Europe. Siena never recovered its former economic and cultural position, but neither was its decline as great as is sometimes stated. Recent studies have demonstrated a remarkable resilience in all spheres of life, and no one would now treat Sienese painting after 1350 as a mere footnote to earlier achievements. If the fourteenth century was the golden age of Sienese art, the fifteenth century was a silver one—rich in inventiveness, as artists confronted the nascent style of Renaissance art in Florence with a full awareness of their own heritage. In the sixteenth century the city produced two artists of international stature, Baldassare Peruzzi and Domenico Beccafumi (the latter will be the subject of a much-awaited monographic exhibition in Siena in 1989), and there has even been a revival of interest in Sienese Baroque painting.

However, whereas fourteenth-century Sienese painting has long been the object of intense study, painting in Renaissance Siena has, on the whole, remained the province of specialists. Fortunately, among its enthusiasts was Bernard Berenson, who was largely responsible for the vogue Sienese painting enjoyed with American collectors in the early decades of this century. John G. Johnson, Andrew Mellon, Samuel H. Kress, Philip and Robert Lehman, George and Florence Blumenthal, and Maitland F. Griggs are but a few of the avid collectors who enriched American museums. The combined holdings of the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, are, indeed, second only to those of the Siena Pinacoteca. In this sense, the present event is long overdue—and it is fitting that the first exhibition devoted to painting in Renaissance Siena should be in honor of John Pope-Hennessy, whose books and articles have contributed so much to our knowledge of the period.

Intentionally, the exhibition does not attempt to present a panorama of painting in Renaissance Siena—a task that would not, in any case, be possible. Rather, the focus is on the most remarkable aspect of Sienese art, narrative painting, reuniting narrative cycles from the predellas of altarpieces long since dismantled and dispersed in private and public collections. Thus, visitors will have a unique opportunity to appreciate the creative genius of Sienese painters. Some of the most celebrated narrative cycles of the fifteenth century—Sassetta's predella from the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 a–f), with its astonishing interior views and landscape vistas; the Master of the Osservanza's haunting Saint Anthony Abbot series (cat. 10 a–h); Giovanni di Paolo's visionary scenes from the Life of Saint Catherine of Siena (cat. 38 a–j); and Matteo di Giovanni's Placidi predella (cat. 49 a–c), with its Roman-inspired settings—are shown together for the first (and almost certainly the last) time since their disassembly in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Moreover, through a unique effort of cooperation and collaboration, Francesco di Giorgio's fragmentary *Nativity* (cat. 65 b) in the Metropolitan Museum is here reunited with its cleaned and reassembled lunette from the National Gallery, Washington, and Sassetta's well-known *Journey of the Magi* (cat. 2 a)—cleaned with astonishing results—is exhibited with its magical companion, the *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. 2 b), from the Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena. Sev-

eral previously unpublished or newly discovered pictures are also included. Additionally, visitors will have a rare opportunity to compare paintings with manuscript illuminations by the same artist. On all these counts the Metropolitan Museum is profoundly grateful to the lenders.

We are particularly pleased that the sponsor of this exhibition is the Monte dei Paschi di Siena, a bank whose origins can be traced back to 1472. Today the Monte dei Paschi is the single most active promoter of cultural life in Siena. It houses a unique archive and a distinguished collection of Siennese paintings. We are also most appreciative for a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The trustees of the Robert Lehman Collection have graciously allowed the exhibition to be installed in the Lehman Wing, a fitting testimony to Robert Lehman's own love of Siennese art.

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Monte dei Paschi di Siena—one of the most eminent international banks—has a tradition of cultural activities spanning five centuries. Its founding in 1472 was commemorated by Benvenuto di Giovanni's fresco of the Madonna of Mercy painted in 1481 for the *monte's* administrators. Today, the fresco is one of many paintings that can be admired by visitors to the bank's headquarters. Throughout its history, the Monte dei Paschi has commissioned works from outstanding Siennese artists. It has, moreover, played an increasingly active role in cultural and artistic ventures.

In addition to establishing a fund for the restoration of works of art in the province of Siena, it has built up its own considerable collections—of primarily Siennese objects. Of these, pride of place belongs to the Chigi-Saracini Collection, formed in Siena in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by one of the city's patrician families; their last descendant, Count Guido Chigi-Saracini, also founded the prestigious Accademia Musicale Chigiana, whose activities are sponsored largely by the Monte dei Paschi.

During the last few years, the Monte dei Paschi has initiated a series of Fall exhibitions. These have included the Early Italian paintings in the Chigi-Saracini Collection and those of the Baroque painter Bernardino Mei in the bank's collection. This year the exhibition will comprise paintings of the sixteenth century. Among the exhibitions of national significance sponsored by the Monte dei Paschi was one on Siennese painted sculpture; another, in preparation, will be devoted to the leading Mannerist painter, Domenico Beccafumi. Each is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue.

The Monte dei Paschi attaches special importance to the current exhibition of Siennese painting of the Renaissance organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Sponsorship in this instance also involves an exchange of loans: of the Metropolitan Museum's *Journey of the Magi* by Sassetta to Siena in 1986, and of the Chigi-Saracini *Adoration of the Magi* to New York, thus enabling the two fragments of a single altarpiece to be reunited and seen together in both cities. "Painting in Renaissance Siena" is the first exhibition outside Italy to be sponsored by the Monte dei Paschi. With this exhibition it affirms its tradition of blending humanistic values with a constant attention to the changing economic and technological developments in contemporary society.

Piero Barucci
Chairman
Monte dei Paschi di Siena

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition is the product of two complementary desires: to honor John Pope-Hennessy, with whom I was privileged to work for ten years, and to provide a unique occasion for reevaluating the achievement of a school of painting that has fascinated me ever since I visited Siena in 1968. My first debt of gratitude is, therefore, to John Pope-Hennessy, whose articles and books—the first of which, on Giovanni di Paolo, was written when he was twenty-three years old—have contributed so much to our understanding of fifteenth-century Sienese art. My second debt is to Larry Kanter and Carl Strehlke, longstanding friends, fellow enthusiasts of Sienese painting, and pupils of John Pope-Hennessy. They set aside their own ongoing work for this project, making it very much a joint venture. Both the contents of the exhibition and quality of the catalogue have benefited in a fundamental way from their contributions. Carl Strehlke made himself available in Florence, where he is researching a new catalogue of the Italian paintings in the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to check archival notices, hunt down photographs, measure pictures, and contact museum officials. My debt to him is enormous.

A special thanks is due to the private collectors and museums who have made this exhibition possible. In many cases exceptions to a laudable policy against the loan of panel paintings were made because the institutions were convinced of the merits of this endeavor. I should add that only objects that could be hand carried, were in stable condition, and had a demonstrable rather than a putative reason for being included were requested. To the private owners, curators, conservators, and a host of individuals who patiently answered questions and furnished a variety of information I am extremely grateful. There is space here to mention only a few of the many people who have given advice and help: Mark Aronson, Jack Baer, Ingeborg Bähr, István Barkóczi, Joan Broderick, Moreno Bucci, David Bull, Pierluigi Leone de Castris, Heidi Chin, Elizabeth Conran, Gino Corti, Frank Dabell, Charles Dempsey, Everett Fahy, Sarah Faunce, Sarah Fisher, Sydney Freedberg, Gaudenz Freuler, P. O. Eugenio Gargiulo O.S.B., Donald Garstang, Renzo Grandi, Marco Grassi, Richard Green, Mina Gregori, Anthony Hirschel, W. A. P. Hoeben, Kenneth Hood, Ay-Whang Hsia, Michael Jaffé, Andrea Kirsh, Marie Korey, Michel Laclotte, Andrew Ladis, Iva Lisikewycz, Anne Lurie, Fabrizio Mancinelli, Patrice Marandel, Ferenc Merényi, Mario Modestini, Gabriel Naughton, Serena Padovani, Suzanne Penn, Jutta Penndorf, Edmond Poniatowski, Joseph Rishel, Luigi Roncoroni, Allen Rosenbaum, Francis Russell, Max Seidel, George Shackelford, Denys Sutton, Michael Swicklik, Dominique Thiébaud, Walter Timoshuk, Filippo Todini, Mark Tucker, Ian Wardropper, Martha Wolff, Massimo Zelman, and Federico Zeri.

Above the arched opening of the main gate leading into Siena from Florence, the Porta Camollia, is the inscription *Cor magis tibi Sena pandit*. Although the sentiment expressed was intended for the entry into the city of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando de' Medici, in 1629, it holds true today. Without numerous Sienese friends in the superintendency, the communal library, and the state archives, this exhibition and its catalogue would have suffered. The authors would like to thank Piero Torriti, Cecilia Alessi, Alessandro Bagnoli, Alberto Cornice, Anna Maria Guiducci, Laura Martini, Sonia Fineschi, Maria Assunta Ceppari, Curzio Bastianoni, Mauro Civai, and Fabio Torchio.

From the outset, I hoped that this exhibition would be sponsored by the Monte dei Paschi di Siena, inasmuch as this institution stands at the center of cultural life in Siena. That this has happened is due in large measure to the efforts of Carlo Sbardella, Edward Giacomelli, Donatella Capresi, and Lorenzo Maccari.

For the catalogue I was fortunate enough to have Bruce Campbell as the designer and Ellen Shultz as the editor. Helga Lose and Gwen Roginsky have seen it through the various production stages under the careful eye of John O'Neill. My own burden was much lightened by the assistance of Margherita Giacometti, Andrea Bayer, and Andrea Malvezzi. At a crucial stage Pia Palladino took charge during a summer internship. Rodolfo Aiello coordinated and checked the bibliography and Sylvia Farrington compiled the index.

I have a deep debt to John Brealey and his staff—particularly to Gisela Helmkampf and George Bisacca—for their assistance, advice, and work on the exhibition.

The complicated arrangements for loans and insurance have been handled by John Buchanan and Herb Moskowitz with their customary adroitness. I should also like to thank, at the Metropolitan Museum, Emily Rafferty, Mahrukh Tarapor, Linda Sylling, and Richard Morsches, as well as Michael Battista, who was in charge of the design of the exhibition. Finally, I would like to thank Paul Guth, Edwin Weisl, and the Lehman Foundation for their support.

Keith Christiansen
Curator
Department of European Paintings
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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PAINTING IN
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SIENA



Figure 1. Francesco di Giorgio. *The Virgin Protecting Siena*. Archivio di Stato, Siena

PAINTING IN RENAISSANCE SIENA

Keith Christiansen

To anyone approaching Siena from the south along the via Francigena, on which countless pilgrims made their way from Northern Europe to Rome in the Middle Ages, the city still appears much as it did in 1459, when Pope Pius II returned to his ancestral home to celebrate his accession to the papacy and to pressure the city to readmit the nobles, including his own illustrious family—the Piccolomini—to public office. Sited on the ridges of three hills, its red-brick walls cutting an irregular pattern across the valley, the city appears like a turreted reliquary, dominated by the black-and-white striped campanile of the cathedral, the crenellated Torre del Mangia of the Palazzo Pubblico, and the bell tower of Santa Maria dei Servi. In the fifteenth century these landmarks would have vied for predominance with numerous private towers, since demolished. The image is a recurring one in Sienese painting, perhaps most memorably depicted by Francesco di Giorgio on a *biccherna* cover of 1467 (fig. 1) commemorating the Virgin's protection of the city from earthquakes.

Then, as now, the major access was through the monumental fortified gate, the Porta Romana, its inner door flanked by statues of the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, to whom the city traced its legendary origins, and surmounted by a fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin (removed in 1980 and now in the church of San Francesco), signifying the city's dedication to the mother of Christ: *Sena Vetus Civitas Virginis*. The fourteenth-century walls were constructed as a physical defense, but they also served as a psychological barrier between the city proper and the countryside, or *contado*—a division almost as abrupt today as in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's celebrated fresco *Good Government* of 1338–40 in the Palazzo Pubblico. To be truly Sienese was to be born and to live within the walls of Siena, and the greatest humiliation was to be expelled from the city. Understandably, this keen sense of identity was especially evident when Siena's political and economic rival, Florence, was involved, and it colored every aspect of life, including art.

Pius II has left a graphic example of this attitude in his autobiography, *I Commentarii*. In 1459 he had resolved to elevate the country town of his birth, Corsignano, to a bishopric rechristened Pienza, and to build a cathedral and family palace in the most progressive style. This entailed hiring a Florentine, Bernardo Rossellino, since Sienese architects remained faithful to their native Gothic style. Resentment ran high, and Rossellino had constantly to do battle with his Sienese workers. When, in 1462, Pius returned to inspect the completed buildings, there surfaced "many insinuations against the architect: that he had cheated; that he had blundered in the construction; that he had spent more than 50,000 ducats when his estimate had been 18,000." There was truth in all of these accusations, but the pope understood the real underlying cause. "He was," writes Pius, "a Florentine named Bernardo, hateful to the Sienese from his mere nationality."¹

Any analysis of the relationship of Sienese to Florentine art must take into account this basic factor of Sienese life. Florentines did, occasionally, receive commissions in Siena. Ghiberti was among the artists engaged in 1416 on the project for the new baptismal font, and so—after Jacopo della Quercia's failure to meet his agreed-upon deadline—was Donatello. Donatello also cast a bronze tomb slab (Siena Cathedral) for Giovanni de' Pecci, Bishop of Grosseto, and later took up residence in Siena from 1457 to 1459. Filippo Lippi visited the city in 1426 (the reason why is not known), and Bernardo Rossellino and Benedetto da

Maiano were both employed in Siena by relatives or associates of Pius II, but these artists were the exceptions. A natural distrust of Florentine innovations went hand in hand with an acute awareness of native traditions. This is hardly surprising, considering that, in the fourteenth century, Sienese artists had set the pace throughout Europe. The Lorenzetti brothers had been innovators in pictorial perspective and illusionism, while Simone Martini had provided the model for what was to become the International Gothic style. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, Northern artists such as Jacquemart de Hesdin and the Limbourgs visited the city, studied its most famous pictures, and, in turn, may have influenced its artists (see cat. 2, 10 f), while the Duke of Berry kept abreast of the latest artistic events through scouts—one of whom, Pierre Salmon, wrote the duke in 1408 to recommend the intarsia work of Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori. Ghiberti himself could not contain his enthusiasm for the work of Ambrogio Lorenzetti (“famosissimo e singolarissimo maestro . . . perfettissimo . . . uomo di grande ingegno . . . nobilissimo disegnatore . . .”), although he was less sympathetic to that of Simone Martini whom, he says, the Sienese considered their greatest painter.²

It cannot have been easy to grow up nursing artistic ambitions in Siena in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Look where one might, the monuments of a past glorious age were everywhere in evidence. The *Maestà* by Duccio was on the high altar of the cathedral, and each of the four patronal chapels in the transept was decorated with a masterpiece by one of the outstanding artists of the following generation. The chapel of San Savino contained Pietro Lorenzetti's *Birth of the Virgin* (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena), that of Sant'Ansano, Simone Martini's *Annunciation* (Uffizi, Florence), while in the chapel of San Vittore was Bartolomeo Bulgarini's *Nativity* (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge),³ and in that of San Crescenzo, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple* (Uffizi, Florence). These were far more than landmarks of Sienese and European painting: They were paradigms of what art could achieve and communicate, and they were the objects of popular devotion. By 1420 Simone's *Annunciation*, kept behind a red curtain that was opened during Mass and on feast days, had been updated with a new frame and the chapel furnished with a stained-glass window, iron grille, and intarsia choir stalls by Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori.⁴ These works formed part of the common experience of Sienese worshipers, and in his thirtieth Lenten sermon delivered in Siena's Piazza del Campo in 1427, Saint Bernardino could refer familiarly to the *Annunciation* to make a homiletic point: “Have you seen that Annunciate [Virgin] that is in the cathedral, at the altar of Sant'Ansano, next to the sacristy? Of a certainty, she seems to me to strike the most beautiful attitude, the most reverent and modest imaginable. Note that she does not look at the angel but is almost frightened. She knew that it was an angel; why was she troubled? What would she have done had it been a man! Take this as an example, you maidens.”⁵

Opposite the cathedral, the façade of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala (the Spedale della Scala) was decorated with another cycle of frescoes dedicated to the Virgin by the Lorenzetti and Simone Martini. The main council rooms of the Palazzo Pubblico were, once again, decorated with the frescoes of *Good* and *Bad Government* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the monumental *Maestà* by Simone Martini, with their admonitions to those in power to govern the city well. To this list of works should be added the altarpieces and fresco cycles in the great monastic churches. The cumulative effect must have been as daunting to subsequent generations as the work of Raphael and Michelangelo proved to be to artists of the sixteenth century, and it is not surprising that many artists between 1350 and 1425 were content to repeat the compositions established by their famous forebears. Moreover, after Saint Bernardino had personally sanctioned Simone's interpretation, is there any wonder that virtually every major depiction of the *Annunciation* painted in Siena between 1430 and 1475 took this cathedral altarpiece as its point of departure, and that in the 1450s a replica was commissioned from Giovanni di Pietro and Matteo di Giovanni for the church of San Pietro Ovale (see cat. 45 a, b)?

The importance of the fourteenth-century cathedral altarpieces for fifteenth-century painting merits a separate study, for their compositions and the innovative formula of a large, narrative center panel flanked by figures of standing saints determined the appearance of numerous works—from Giovanni di Paolo's altarpiece for the chapel of the Pizzicaiuoli in the church of Santa Maria della Scala (see cat. 38 a–m) to the Master of the Osservanza's *Birth of the Virgin* (see discussion for cat. 11) and Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio's *Nativity* (fig. 8; both works are now in the Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano). It is, however, crucial to note that the decision to replicate famous prototypes of the past was in all likelihood stipulated by the patrons. This is evident from the contract between the commune and Sano di Pietro for a predella for the altarpiece in the Cappella de' Signori of the Palazzo Pubblico (cat. 18). The altarpiece had been painted a century earlier by Simone Martini, and although by 1448 it was in a state of alarming disrepair, that it should be discarded was unthinkable. A new frame was commissioned together with a predella of five scenes of episodes from the Life of the Virgin, which, the contract specifies, were to be "similar to those above the doors of the Spedale della Scala" painted by the Lorenzetti and Simone Martini. Similar provisions must have been a common feature of numerous fifteenth-century contracts. Although Sano's work, in general, is typified as conservative in its approach, this assessment hardly does justice to the cultural viewpoint it exemplifies.

The miracle of fifteenth-century Sienese painting is that artists were able to turn this rich heritage to account. The Lorenzetti brothers' experiments with the creation of a convincing pictorial space provided Sassetta with a model for his own parallel interests. In the predella of the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 a–f), painted between 1423 and 1426, Sassetta invested the very premise of Pietro Lorenzetti's work with new life, opening vistas onto monastic courtyards and libraries, or describing in microcosm the interior of a conventual church replete with altarpieces (especially notable are those set into arched recesses—a type of altarpiece that must have been fairly common in Siena). It is extremely unlikely that Sassetta had visited Florence at this date, and there is no evidence that in 1423 Masaccio had yet mastered a representational technique comparable to Sassetta's. Indeed, convincing though Sassetta's interiors seem, they are based on an empirical method of spatial projection foreign to Florentine art. The primary source for the narrative scenes of the Arte della Lana altarpiece was the polyptych painted by Pietro Lorenzetti in 1329 for the high altar of the very church for which Sassetta's work was intended. The landscapes and architectural settings of his altarpiece invited comparison with those of Pietro's, and they offered proof that the native traditions of Sienese art were both applicable and capable of further development. Perhaps only in the work of Gentile da Fabriano, who was in Siena in the summer of 1425 and returned there in 1426 to complete an altarpiece for the notaries' palace in the Piazza del Campo, can a contemporary analogy be found for Sassetta's sensitivity to light and atmosphere. In the Arte della Lana altarpiece a new, Sienese vernacular style emerged. At the same time, the parallel interests of Sassetta, Masaccio, and Gentile da Fabriano opened up an avenue of future exchange for Sienese artists—one that was notably taken up by Sassetta's gifted anonymous follower, the Master of the Osservanza, whose scene of *Saint Anthony at Mass* (cat. 10 a), set in the cathedral chapel of Sant'Ansano mentioned by Bernardino in his sermon, employs a system of spatial projection that is a modified variant of Florentine perspective practice.

Sassetta's awareness of Florentine art after about 1430 and his ability to chart a course between it and native Sienese traditions is evidence of a remarkably acute, critical frame of mind. Nowhere is the matter more complex than in his altarpiece of the Madonna of the Snow (fig. 2), commissioned in 1430 for a chapel in the cathedral (now Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence). Sassetta understood perfectly well that his altarpiece would be compared with those from the preceding century, and he therefore chose as his model no less a work than Duccio's *Maestà*, with its imposing image of the enthroned Ma-

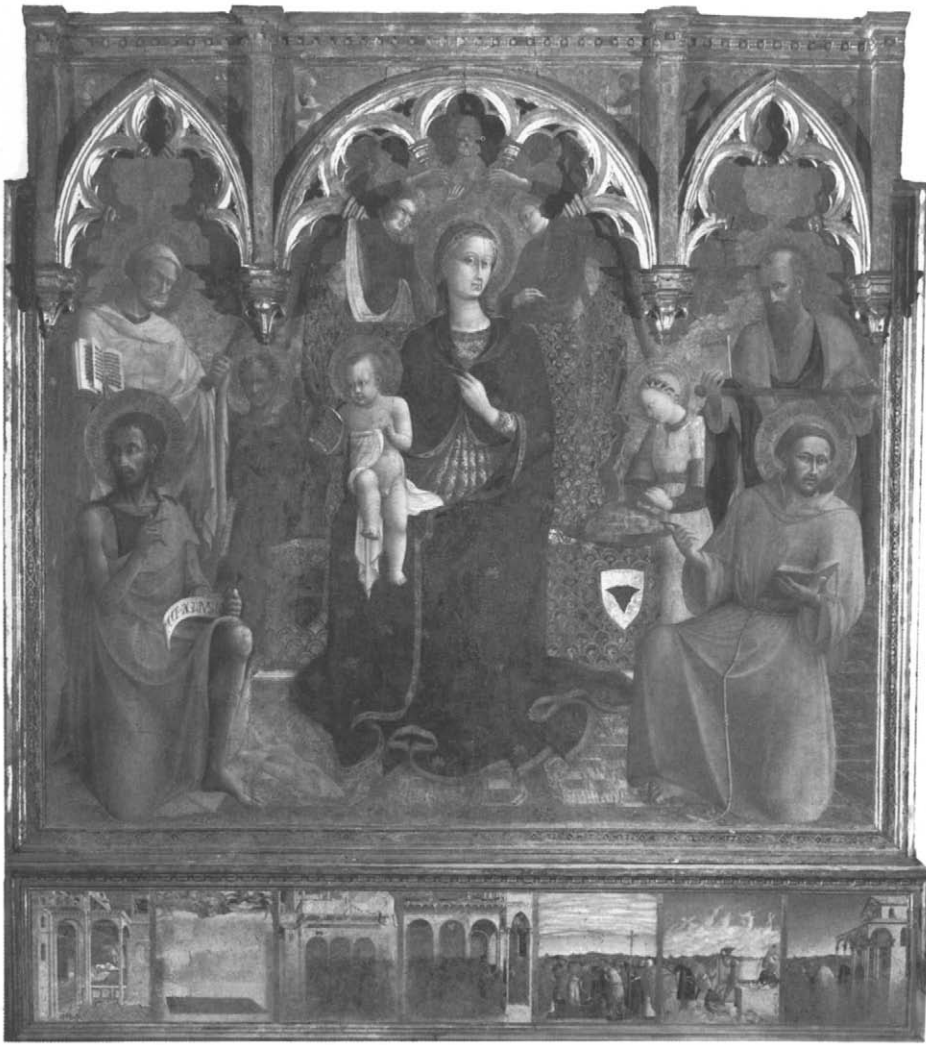


Figure 2. Sassetta. *Madonna of the Snow*. Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence

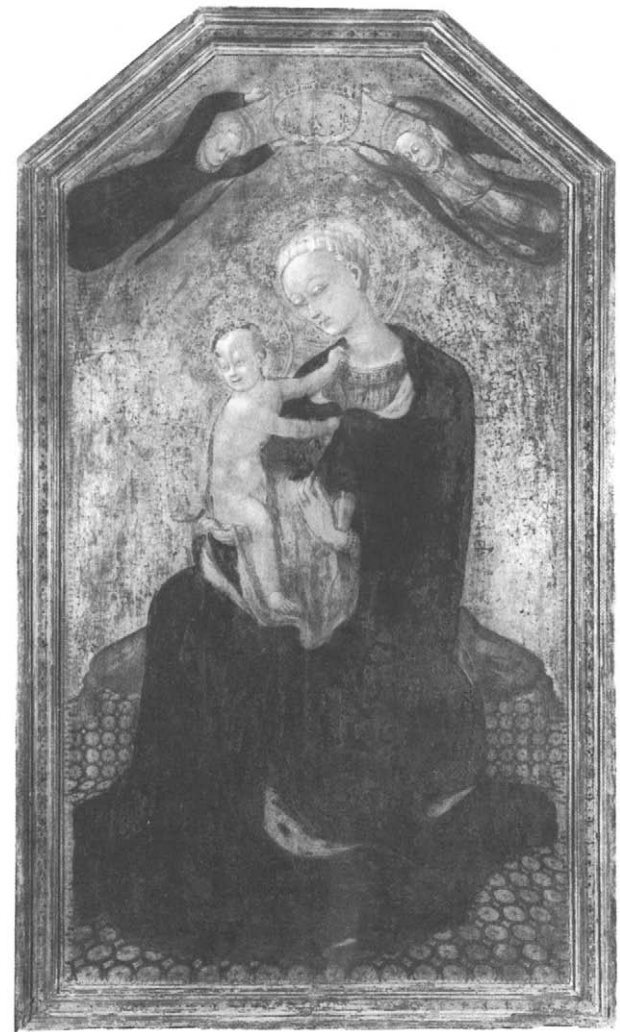


Figure 3. Sassetta. *Madonna and Child with Angels*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

onna surrounded by adoring angels and flanked by rows of standing and kneeling saints shown in an enormous picture field uninterrupted by framing elements. Sassetta adapted these features to the requirements of a Gothic altarpiece by positioning two kneeling saints beneath the lateral, pointed arches at emphatic diagonals that create a dynamic spatial and emotional tension. He modernized the spatial content by establishing a rigorous viewing point at the center of the panel, so that everything above it is seen from below, and everything below it is seen from above. This system could scarcely have been attempted without direct acquaintance with the rudiments of linear perspective as first laid down by Brunelleschi. Typically, however, Sassetta adapted this more systematic approach to Sienese practice, employing steep orthogonals to suggest space but not to measure it, and emphasizing pattern through the lavish use of materials. The figures, too, are based not on nature but on geometric abstractions that clarify spatial relationships and enhance the surface design. A comparison with Filippo Lippi's altarpiece for the church of Santo Spirito in Florence, commissioned several years later (Louvre, Paris), is instructive, for whereas in both an attempt has been made to unify and rationalize the fictive space within a Gothic framework, Lippi articulated his composition within a marble enclosure of Renaissance design, reduced gold to a purely decorative role, and modeled the figures by means of a carefully controlled light, the source of which is indicated by a window in the left wall. Whether Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* is, in fact, based

on a similar, earlier work by Lippi—such as the small, portable altarpiece in the Cini Collection, Venice—is not certain, although the grinning angel holding a platter of snow suggests such a source⁶ (Sassetta had unquestionably visited Florence by this date and studied Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel). The fact remains that what might at first be thought of as a Florentine scheme has been reinterpreted in terms of the model provided by Duccio.

The proof that Sassetta's point of departure was Duccio's *Maestà* is in the framework of the altarpiece. This consists of an upper section of three projecting Gothic arches and a flat, decorative molding around the bottom and sides of the main panel. Such a molding is a typical feature of a number of Ducciesque altarpieces—probably including the *Maestà*.⁷ By about 1320 such moldings had been superseded by large supporting piers or pilasters, in keeping with Gothic architecture. Sassetta's revival of this archaeological detail—not unlike Brunelleschi's selective use of the architectural vocabulary of Florentine Romanesque buildings—has seldom received comment, but it is clear proof of his artistic intentions and ambition. In a similar fashion, his large *Madonna and Child with Angels* in the Siena Pinacoteca (fig. 3), which was probably painted in 1438 for the Palazzo Pubblico,⁸ revives a type of image and framing characteristic of Sienese painting of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries for which Simone Martini's monumental image of Saint Louis of Toulouse (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples) offers, perhaps, the closest analogy.

Sassetta's work demonstrated that it was possible for an artist to be both modern and Sienese. Indeed, his exceptional ability to acclimatize Florentine innovations sometimes makes it difficult to pinpoint the sources of his style. How magically he transforms the shivering neophyte in Masaccio's fresco *Saint Peter Baptizing the Neophytes* (fig. 4) in the Carmine, Florence, into a beggar receiving the cloak from Saint Martin (fig. 5) in the fragment of his 1433 Crucifix from the church of San Martino. And how



Figure 4. Masaccio. *Saint Peter Baptizing the Neophytes* (detail). Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence

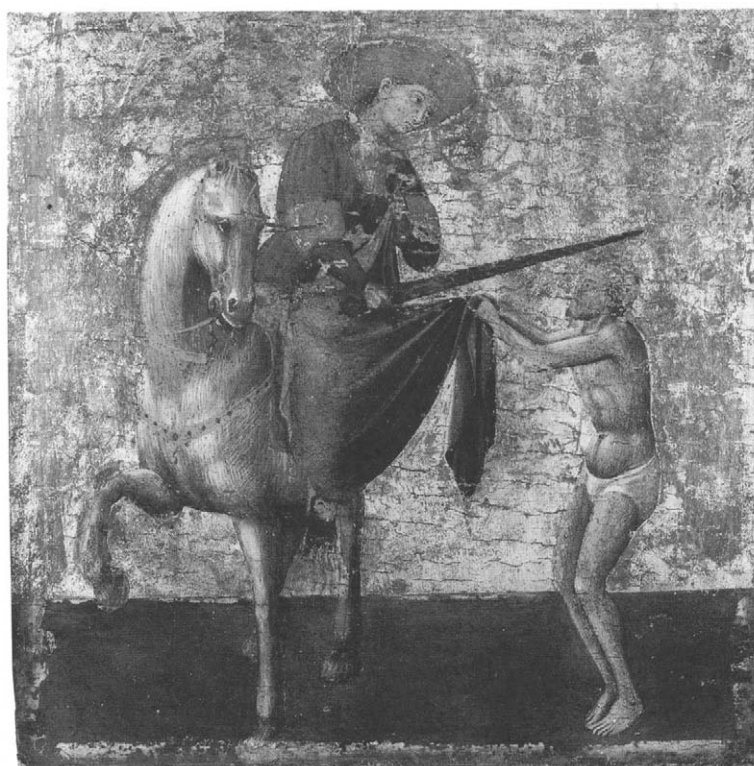


Figure 5. Sassetta. *Saint Martin and the Beggar*. Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena



Figure 6. Sassetta. *The Soul of the Miser of Citerna*. Musée du Louvre, Paris

discreetly he applies the rudiments of linear perspective to depict the monastic setting of a miracle of the Blessed Ranieri Rasini in the predella of the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece (fig. 6) of 1437–44. A line has been incised along the vertical axis and then crossed with a short, horizontal incision somewhat higher than the heads of the standing friars. The orthogonals of the picture—the opening to the monks' rustic choir stalls, the lectern with its choir book held in place by a weighted strap, the steps and the altar at the right (before which two youths stand in adoration), and the beams of the ceiling—recede to this vanishing point. The system marks a technical advance over that employed in the *Arte della Lana* predella (cat. 1 c), but the pictorial vocabulary is unaltered. The idea of a continuous landscape separated by gold bands in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow* altarpiece (fig. 2) may derive from Masaccio's work in the Brancacci Chapel, where the hills in the *Tribute Money* are continued in the adjacent scene of *Saint Peter Preaching* (the hills in the latter were painted by Masaccio and the figures by Masolino), but the more specific elements of Masaccio's style have been completely assimilated, and the swallow-filled sky and barren terrain of the fifth scene depict the surroundings of Siena, not Florence. Sassetta's work resists classification as Gothic or Renaissance: It is first and foremost Siennese, taking from Florentine art only what could be meaningfully grafted onto a native tradition. One searches Sassetta's pictures in vain

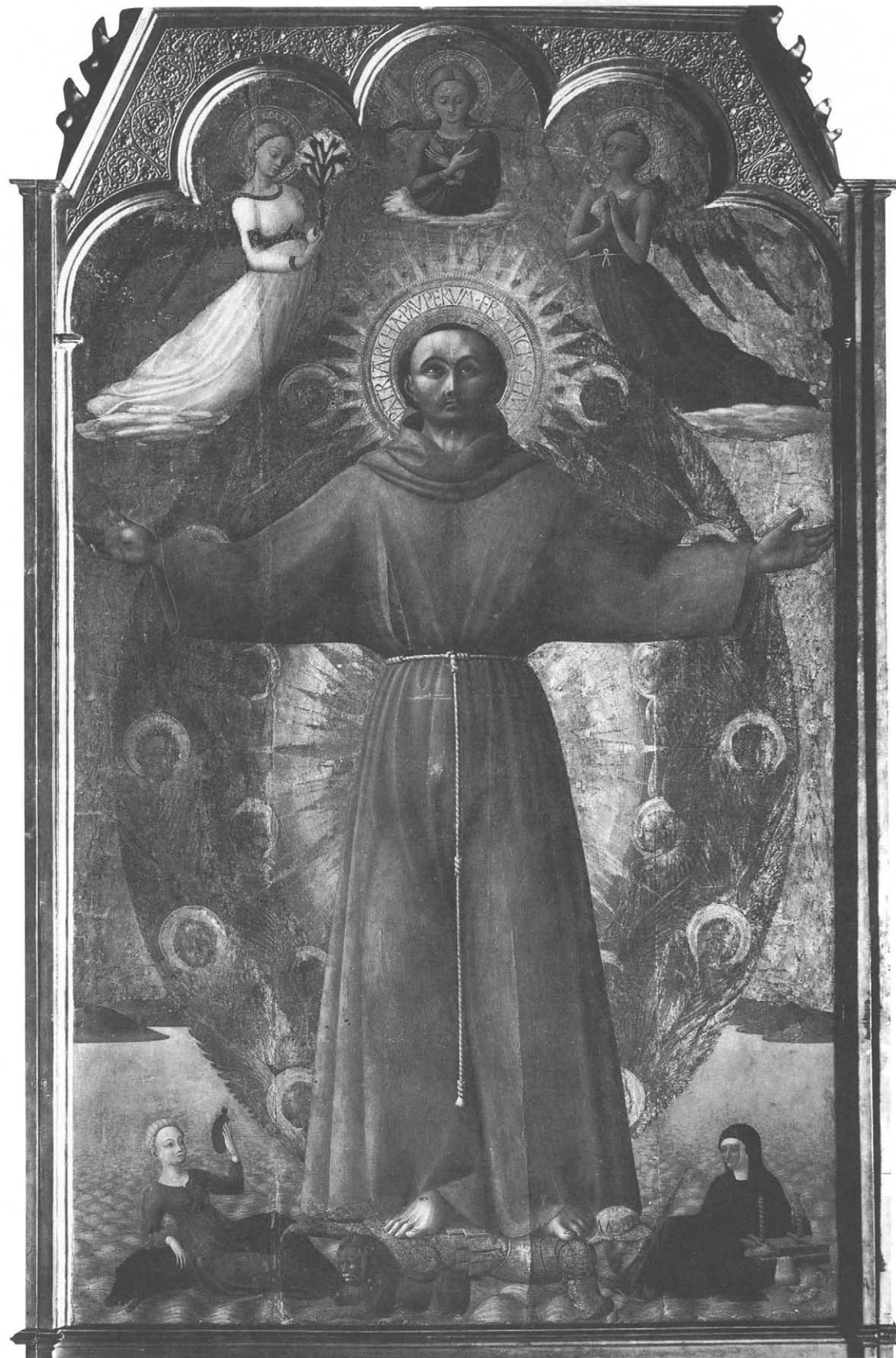


Figure 7. Sassetta. *Saint Francis in Glory*. Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence

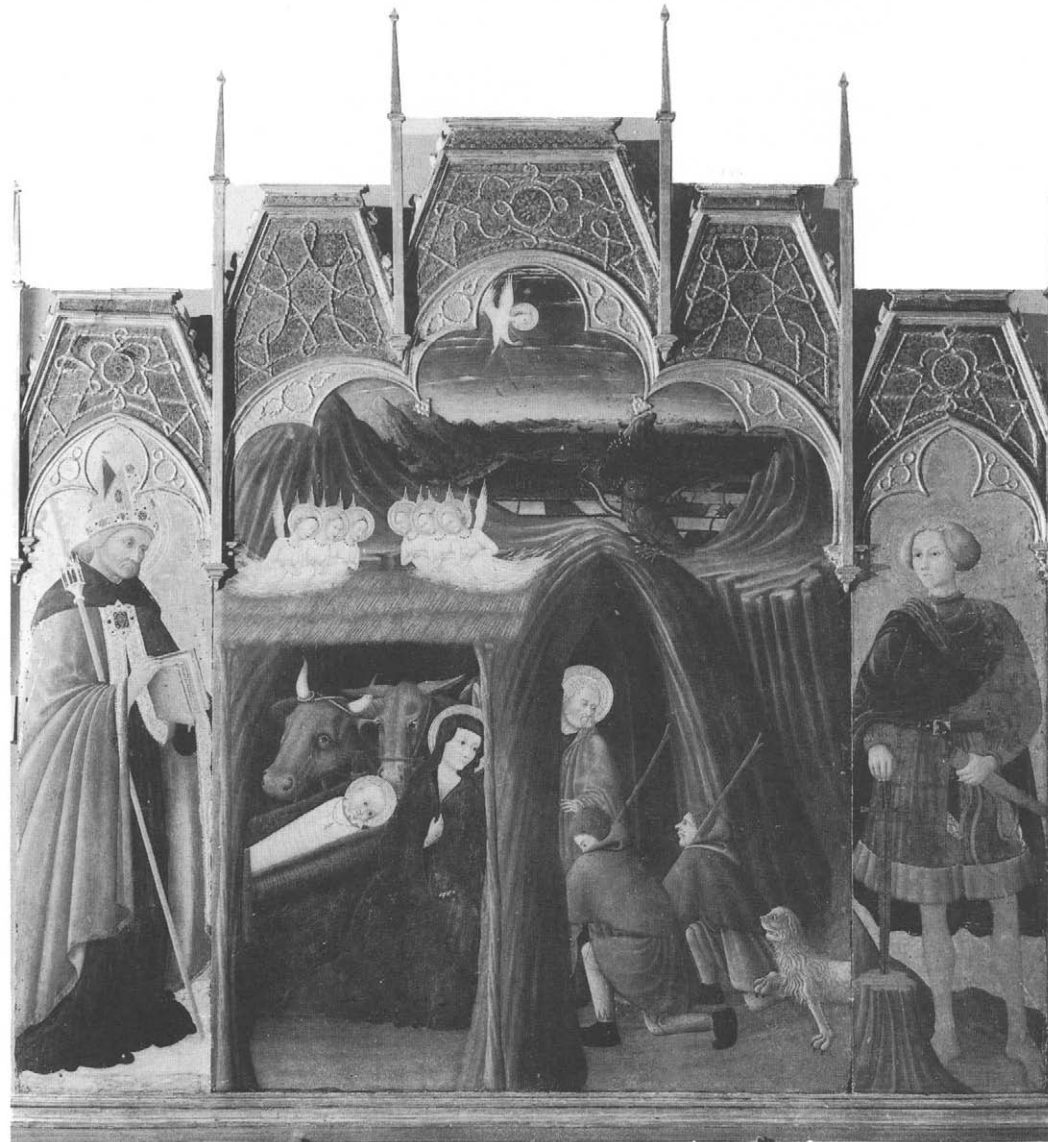


Figure 8. Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio. *The Nativity*. Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano

for any concession to Renaissance decorative motifs (in the narrative scenes of the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece a completely original, post-Gothic idiom has been created). Yet, such was Sassetta's sensitivity to geometry as a basis of composition that when his altarpiece for Borgo Sansepolcro was set up on the high altar of the church of San Francesco, no less an artist than Piero della Francesca studied it with profit, extracting from the exalted image of *Saint Francis in Glory* (fig. 7; Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence) his first ideas for his own *Madonna of Mercy*, commissioned in 1445.

The path blazed by Sassetta toward an authentically Siennese post-Gothic style could be traveled only by artists of a comparable vision and ability. Even a painter of the eccentric genius of Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio found it difficult to negotiate his way between the equally powerful attractions of native traditions, represented by the Lorenzetti and Sassetta, and the innovations of Florentine painting, which he, like every other major Siennese artist, studied firsthand in the late 1420s (Vasari does not name the "many foreigners . . . who went to study the [Brancacci] chapel,"⁹ but Siennese artists were certainly among the most attentive). In Pietro di Giovanni's *Nativity* in Asciano (fig. 8), obviously commissioned by the Augustinians of that Siennese outpost in imitation of the Siena Cathedral altarpiece by Bartolomeo Bulgarini, the artist rejects a rational approach to spatial construction in favor of an intuitive one that,

nonetheless, borrows the convention of patterned fields to create the distant landscape. Perhaps only the Master of the Osservanza was able to strike a balance comparable to Sassetta's—one epitomized by his frequent use of a perspective structure akin to that current in Florentine painting as a preliminary scaffolding that might be modified empirically or ignored altogether as the work proceeded (see cat. 10 a, 12 a).

The situation is somewhat different with Giovanni di Paolo, for whom painting was an imaginative rather than a cognitive act, a conceptual rather than a descriptive venture. If Sassetta's art was based on the empiricism of his fourteenth-century predecessors, Giovanni di Paolo found inspiration in pre-Ducciesque, Byzantine-style painting, with its ambivalence toward pictorial space and its exploration of the realm of subjective experience. He, too, traveled to Florence about 1430 and studied the most recent masterpieces of Renaissance painting. However, it was not the new principles of the naturalistic style that interested him but the compositional formulas they offered. Works of art—whether the native products of Simone Martini or the Lorenzetti, the contemporary paintings of non-Sienese artists such as Gentile da Fabriano and Fra Angelico, or the bronze reliefs of Ghiberti, Jacopo della Quercia, and Donatello—simply provided ready-made schemes waiting to be imbued with personal meaning. Observation of nature was peripheral to his work, much of which must have been painted from detailed, colored drawings in a model book compiled over a brief period in the late 1420s and early 1430s and utilized again and again. It is, indeed, possible to reconstruct the contents of this model book. It included, among other things, a careful drawing of Gentile da Fabriano's two Florentine altarpieces, Fra Angelico's *Last Judgment*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple*, the Baptistery reliefs by Donatello, Ghiberti, and Jacopo della Quercia, and the reliefs on the Fonte Gaia. By leafing through the pages Giovanni could modify, combine, and transform these various sources and make them his own. Only in this way can one explain, for example, the process by which, in the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (cat. 31), Giovanni borrowed the general features of his composition from a predella panel by Gentile da Fabriano, but he placed the priest behind the altar and gave the interior of the temple a longitudinal nave with a tiled pavement, as in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's altarpiece in the cathedral. It was a completely medieval approach to painting that produced pictures strikingly modern in effect. When apparently naturalistic details appear in Giovanni's work—such as the cast shadows that lie like paper cutouts on the landscape of his *Flight into Egypt* (fig. 9; Siena Pinacoteca) of the mid-1430s—they have been adapted from a prototype (in this case another predella panel by Gentile da Fabriano from the *Adoration of the Magi*) and are an anomaly. Nonetheless, so strong and incandescent was Giovanni's personal vision that his abstracted, outdoor settings not infrequently convey a stronger impression of the actual beauty of southern Tuscany than those of more descriptive artists.

Surprisingly, the peculiar qualities of Giovanni's work seem to have been appreciated by his contemporaries—he was never short of commissions—and they made him an ideal mouthpiece for the Dominicans, with their concerns for theology and the communication of ideas (see cat. 32 a–b). He alone was capable of translating Saint Catherine's mystical visions into visual images in which the logic of perspective is suspended and the fictive space of the architectural settings is willfully bent to enhance the narrative content (cat. 38 a–j). The task of documenting the more pragmatic world of Saint Bernardino fell to the prosaic Sano di Pietro (cat. 20, 24 a,b). And yet, both artists found steady employment in and around Siena; however antithetical their styles now seem, they collaborated on occasion, painting an altarpiece for the Compagnia di San Francesco between 1445 and 1447. Both were among the “illustrious painters” Pius II hired to provide altarpieces for his newly completed cathedral of Pienza in 1462–63.

Sassetta and Giovanni di Paolo represent the continuation of two diverse strands of Sienese painting, and their work had important consequences for later artists, although their reputations barely survived their deaths. The *Madonna of the Snow* (fig. 2), with its carefully articulated space and figural component,



Figure 9. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Flight into Egypt*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

served as the model for a number of altarpieces by Matteo di Giovanni, including his own version of the subject from 1477 (in which he also further explored Sassetta's idea of a continuous, episodic predella: see fig. 19; on deposit at the Siena Pinacoteca). By contrast, Giovanni di Paolo's exploration of a non-rational, subjective space provided a precedent for those later excursions of Neroccio de'Landi and Francesco di Giorgio into a world compounded of equal measures of the rational and irrational (what artist other than Francesco di Giorgio could suggest an irrational, Renaissance space, as in his *Coronation of the Virgin* [fig. 25] in the Siena Pinacoteca?).

The period of most intense contact between Sienese and Florentine artists, the years around 1430, coincides with the first wave of humanist culture, and there can be little doubt that had humanism acquired a stronger, lasting foothold in Siena in the university (the *Studio*), the styles of Sassetta and Giovanni di Paolo would have developed differently. Lack of funds plagued efforts to retain eminent teachers such as Francesco Filelfo, who was hired in 1434 to teach Greek and Latin in Siena following his successes in Florence, where his lectures on Cicero and Homer, Terence and Thucydides, were said to have attracted four hundred people daily. Yet, political duty was no less an impediment to full-time dedication to ancient literature; at least a number of local humanists declared as much to their Florentine colleagues.¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is in these years that inscriptions in humanist lettering first appeared in paintings, although frequently in an impure, bastardized form—as in Giovanni di Paolo's *Madonna and Child* of

1426 for the church of San Domenico (now in Castelnuovo Berardenga). Sassetta consciously contrasted the semihumanist script of the inscribed halos of the figures in his *Madonna of the Snow* (fig. 2) to the Gothic lettering on the scroll held by the Christ Child (it bears a biblical passage). Not surprisingly, the finest humanist script is to be found in the most demonstrably Florentine work: Domenico di Bartolo's 1433 *Madonna of Humility* (fig. 10; Siena Pinacoteca), which was based on the badly damaged picture by Masaccio now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Only under Pius II, in the sixth decade of the fifteenth century, did humanist taste assert itself decisively, and not until the last quarter of the century did there arise a demand for private, secular art such as had existed in Florence from the 1430s on (see cat. 51, 58, 67, 77). In 1432 Domenico di Bartolo painted a portrait of Emperor Sigismund, but the earliest surviving portrait by a Sienese artist—Neroccio de' Landi's ruined picture in the National Gallery, Washington—dates from about 1490.¹¹

Throughout the fifteenth century, commissions in Siena remained predominantly ecclesiastical or communal, and this affected the style adopted by individual artists. Sano di Pietro's work for the commune was, for example, more innovative than his altarpieces, which were calculated to appeal to a conservative, devout audience whose notion of religious painting had changed little since the time of Simone Martini. However, just as, in the fourteenth century, the commune had favored the more realistic, Florentine-influenced style of the Lorenzetti over that of Simone Martini to give form to the practical concerns of government, so in the fifteenth century the task of illustrating the activities of day-to-day life fell to the most progressive artists—in particular to that lone realist among Sienese painters, Domenico di Bartolo, whose cycle of frescoes in the pilgrims' hospice (the Pellegrinaio) of the Spedale della Scala, illustrating the activities of the city's celebrated hospital, is as unique in Italian painting of the fifteenth century as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's cycle of *Good and Bad Government* is for the fourteenth.

Domenico di Bartolo may have received his initial training in Siena, where he maintained a close relationship with Jacopo della Quercia, but his aspirations were Florentine. Whether the impetus came from Masaccio, as in his earliest paintings (cat. 40, 41), or from Domenico Veneziano, with whose work the hospital frescoes (see fig. 11–14, 17, 18, pp. 48–49, 51) have been compared, Domenico di Bartolo seems to have viewed painting in terms of problems of representation: the mastery of perspective and difficult foreshortenings and the description of visual phenomena. He found an ideal patron in Giovanni di Francesco Buzzichelli,¹² the rector of the hospital from 1433 to 1444. Buzzichelli's association with the Florentine branch of the hospital and his familiarity with Florentine art and culture provided a necessary basis for appreciating Domenico's own aspirations—for whatever Domenico's work may have lacked in refine-



Figure 10. Domenico di Bartolo. *Madonna of Humility*.
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

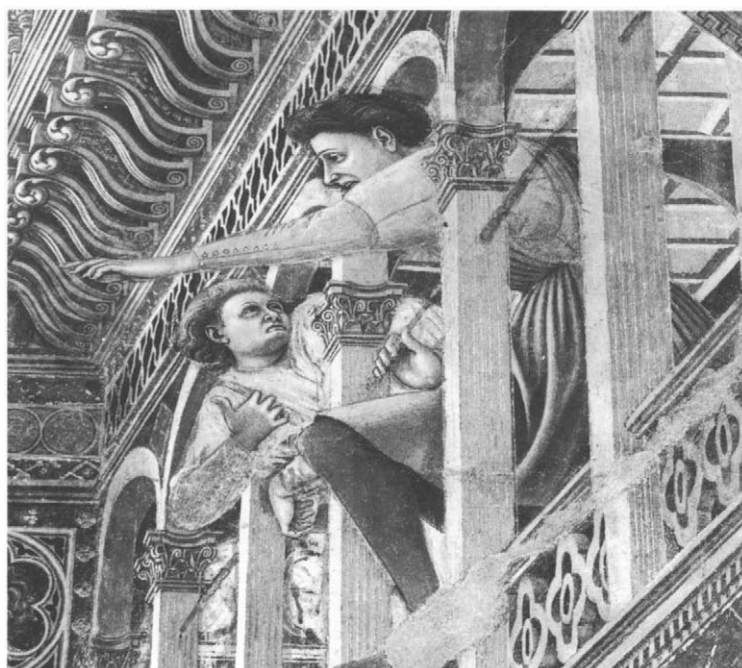


Figure 11. Domenico di Bartolo. *Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges* (detail). Spedale della Scala, Siena

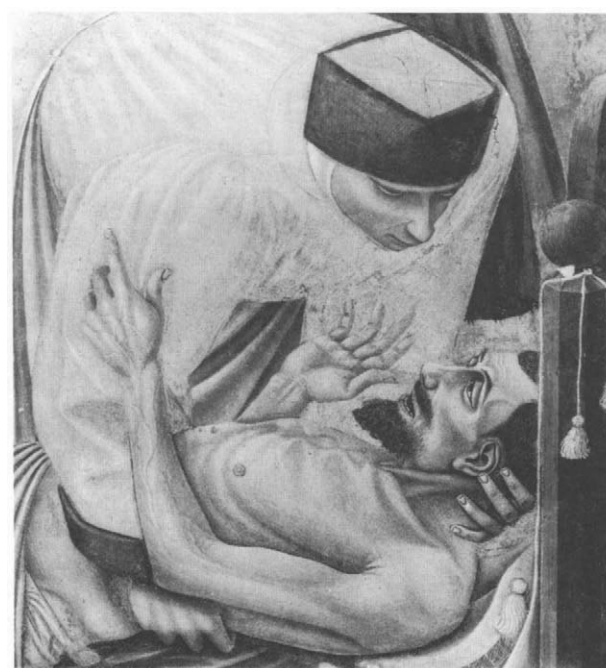


Figure 12. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Care of the Sick* (detail). Spedale della Scala, Siena

ment or restraint it made up for in sheer extravagance of narrative detail and artistic ambition. Later artists such as Matteo di Giovanni or Pietro Orioli found in his work an open challenge to purely local conventions. One cannot help but admire Domenico's delight in creating an architectural space whose depth is measured by the extended arm of a fearless youth in his fresco *Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges* (fig. 11), or his emphatic rendering of an attendant stooping over an emaciated invalid (fig. 12) in the *Care of the Sick* (the interior shows an actual room in the hospital), despite the fact that in each case Domenico has violated the cardinal rule laid down by Leon Battista Alberti in his 1435 treatise on painting, the *Della Pittura*: "I would praise any great variety, provided it is appropriate to what is going on in the picture. When the spectators dwell on observing all the details, then the painter's richness will acquire favor. But I would have this abundance not only furnished with variety, but restrained and full of dignity and modesty. I disapprove of those painters who, in their desire to appear rich or to leave no space empty, follow no system of composition, but scatter everything about in random confusion with the result that their 'historia' does not appear to be doing anything but merely to be in a turmoil."¹³ Despite his attempt to emulate the norms of Florentine painting, Domenico achieved an effect closer to the Late Gothic world of Pisanello, whose work he may have actually known from the church council held in Florence in 1439. It is worth noting that for some of his most remarkable anecdotal details, such as the nurse who dries diapers before a fire, a precedent existed in the work of Pietro Lorenzetti in Assisi: the servants who wash dishes in front of a fire in a room adjacent to the one with the *Last Supper*. Ironically, his fresco of the Madonna of Mercy (cat. 42), painted for the hospital in 1444, is in some respects closer to Florentine ideals than the more ambitious narrative cycle. The figures, grouped in a semicircle around the seated Virgin, whose diagonal pose defines the depth of the picture space, are conceived as life-like portraits (one probably portrays Buzzichelli), and the strongly analytic character of the *sinopia* reveals the degree to which Domenico has assimilated the creative procedures of Florentine art. Although Domenico occasionally painted altarpieces, the finest of which was apparently commissioned for the Carmine in Florence (cat. 41), it seems to have been recognized that his skills were

best employed propagandizing public institutions. That he had no true successor was due, above all, to the fact that the Pellegrinaio cycle was the last commission of its kind.

In a discussion of fifteenth-century art, a distinction must be drawn between a relatively straightforward realistic style, such as that practiced by Domenico di Bartolo, and one that proceeded from a theoretical premise, as expressed in Alberti's *Della Pittura*. If this distinction is rigorously applied to Sienese painting—as opposed to sculpture or architecture—then it must be admitted that, with the possible exception of Pietro Orioli, Siena produced no true Renaissance painter. There were, however, a number of artists who aspired to a Renaissance style, of whom the pivotal figure was Vecchietta. Vecchietta had worked first as an assistant to Masolino in Rome, in a chapel in San Clemente, and later as his successor in the Lombard town of Castiglione Olona, in the Collegiata and in a palace chapel.¹⁴ In both places his employer was Cardinal Branda Castiglione, an early supporter of the humanist movement and a participant in the passionate search for ancient manuscripts in monastic libraries. Masolino imparted to Vecchietta a superficially Renaissance style that could be grafted onto Sienese Gothic traditions with little difficulty, while Cardinal Branda must have encouraged in him a taste for archaeological details. The result was a precocious command of classical architectural motifs combined with a weak figural style. Vecchietta's fresco of 1441 in the Pellegrinaio (see fig. 15, p. 50), illustrating an allegory of the origins of the Spedale della Scala, contains one of the earliest attempts to apply a façade based on a Roman triumphal arch onto a Renaissance basilica (the model for the interior was Brunelleschi's church of Santo Spirito in Florence, while the enframing capitals derive from the base of Donatello's pulpit in Prato, installed in 1438). This ambitious, hybrid structure creates a remarkable decorative effect, but it lacks coherence, and the doll-like, insubstantial figures inhabit its perspectival space with evident diffidence. It is hardly surprising that Vecchietta subsequently reverted to a highly expressive but essentially neo-Gothic style (cat. 44) that has more in common with the narrative scenes of Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece than with the work of Domenico Veneziano on which the Pellegrinaio fresco depends.

Vecchietta's work prior to about 1460 proves that an interest in the decorative vocabulary of Roman architecture did not provide a sufficient basis for the creation of a Renaissance style. His subsequent work is an equally cogent demonstration of the dependence of the methods of Renaissance painting on those of sculpture. It is a historical fact that Renaissance painting in Florence developed in the wake of Renaissance sculpture, and that Donatello's pictorial reliefs preceded Masaccio's frescoes. Only through the use of clay or wax models to study the effects of light on a three-dimensional form and to establish a rational relationship between figure and setting could the formulas of the medieval workshop be superseded. As long as Sienese sculpture was dominated by the brilliant, Late Gothic style of Jacopo della Quercia, Sienese painters were deprived of a basic component of Renaissance art. Vecchietta himself practiced sculpture as well as painting from at least 1442, but they remained separate facets of his activity. In Siena, as in Florence, the agent of change was Donatello.



Figure 13. Donatello. *Madonna and Child with Cherubim*. Cathedral, Siena



Figure 14. Vecchietta. *Saint Catherine of Siena*.
Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

Donatello had worked (in Florence) on the project for the Siena Baptistery font in the 1420s, but only in 1456 was this contact with the *Opera* of the cathedral renewed with a commission for a large bronze statue of Saint John the Baptist. The sculpture was delivered in 1457 (however, without the right arm, which may have been added by Sassetta's son Giovanni di Stefano; the statue was installed in the sacristy between 1474 and 1480, and positioned in the chapel of San Giovanni after 1536). In September 1457, "Donatello, maestro di scultura eccellentissimo," proposed making his association with the *Opera* a permanent one by moving to Siena to "live and die." In the event, his residence there lasted only two years, during which time he created relief panels in wax for a set of bronze doors for the cathedral and did some work for the chapel of San Callisto; of the latter, a marble relief of the Madonna and Child with cherubim in a fictive circular frame, sculpted as though viewed from below, survives (fig. 13).¹⁵ For the first time, Sienese artists had not simply a finished work to imitate, but a creative process. Vecchietta's combined interests in sculpture and painting placed him in a peculiar position to reap the benefits of Donatello's example. The results are evident in the statues that he sculpted for the Loggia della Mercanzia between 1460 and 1462 of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, in which the drapery was studied from actual cloth dipped in plaster and arranged on a lathe figure or armature, and an attempt was made to endow the apostles with a psychological presence exemplative of their personalities as revealed in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The deeply spiritual quality of Donatello's late work struck a responsive chord in Sienese artists, but particularly in Vecchietta, whose two statues opened a new phase in Sienese art that was to culminate in one of the great masterpieces of Italian sculpture, the bronze *Risen Christ* completed in 1476 for Vecchietta's own funerary chapel in the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala (now on the high altar).

Contemporary with the Mercanzia statues Vecchietta received a commission from the commune to paint an image of Saint Catherine (fig. 14) in the Sala del Mappamondo of the Palazzo Pubblico. He took this opportunity to apply the lessons gained from his work as a sculptor, endowing the figure of Catherine with the characteristics of a polychrome statue in a fictive Renaissance niche depicted from a loosely determined viewing point. Vecchietta repeated the conceit a number of times, but nowhere more successfully than in the lateral panels of the altarpiece commissioned by Pius II for the cathedral

of Pienza (fig. 15), in which paired saints stand—a trifle unsteadily—in shell niches painted on gold, thereby reconciling the conflicting demands of Gothic and Renaissance painting (the altarpiece itself, with its central, narrative scene flanked by standing saints, and its pedimental frame interrupted by an arch, is an imaginative Renaissance interpolation of the fourteenth-century Gothic polyptychs in the cathedral of Siena). The Pienza altarpiece is inscribed *OPVS LAVRENTII PETRI SCVLTORIS*, while the statue of Saint Paul on the Mercanzia is signed *OPVS LAVRENTII PETRI PICTORIS*—an apparent assertion of the new unity of purpose underlying Vecchietta's work (his last painting, an altarpiece for his funerary chapel, bears an inscription superimposing *SCVLTORIS* and *PICTORIS*).

It was one thing to simulate statues in paint, but quite another to carry the method over to a narrative picture. Yet this, too, is achieved in the Pienza altarpiece, in which the central scene, the *Assumption of the Virgin*, could almost be imagined as a low relief in gilt bronze. The compositional formula for this scene, in which the frontal figure of the seated Virgin is surrounded by rings of angels playing musical instruments, had been established in the fourteenth century (see cat. 18 b), but Vecchietta organized his version with greater coherence, foreshortening the three tiers to a point in the center of the panel and showing the figure of Christ at the summit head on—so that his body establishes the depth of the burnished gold background, tooled with curls of clouds. Ten years later, in the bronze relief of the Resurrection (fig. 16) in The Frick Collection, Vecchietta brilliantly inverted this interrelationship of painting and sculpture, masterfully gradating the depth of the relief and suggesting the atmospheric

sky by means of young, athletic angels in foreshortened poses frolicking among banks of clouds. Precisely the same formula was adopted contemporaneously by Vecchietta's pupil Francesco di Giorgio for the upper portion of his small altarpiece of the Nativity (cat. 65 a, b). Although the composition of that work has been related to miniatures by Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona—who arrived in Siena in 1467 and 1470, respectively, to work on choir books for Monte Oliveto Maggiore and the cathedral—there can be no doubt that the pictorial device derives from a marble or bronze relief similar in kind to Donatello's *Assumption of the Virgin* carved for the tomb of Cardinal Rainaldo Brancacci in Sant'Angelo a Nilo, Naples, in 1426–28. The balance of probability is that Donatello created a relief of precisely this kind during his residence in Siena. It is just possible that a marble lunette, *The Blood of*

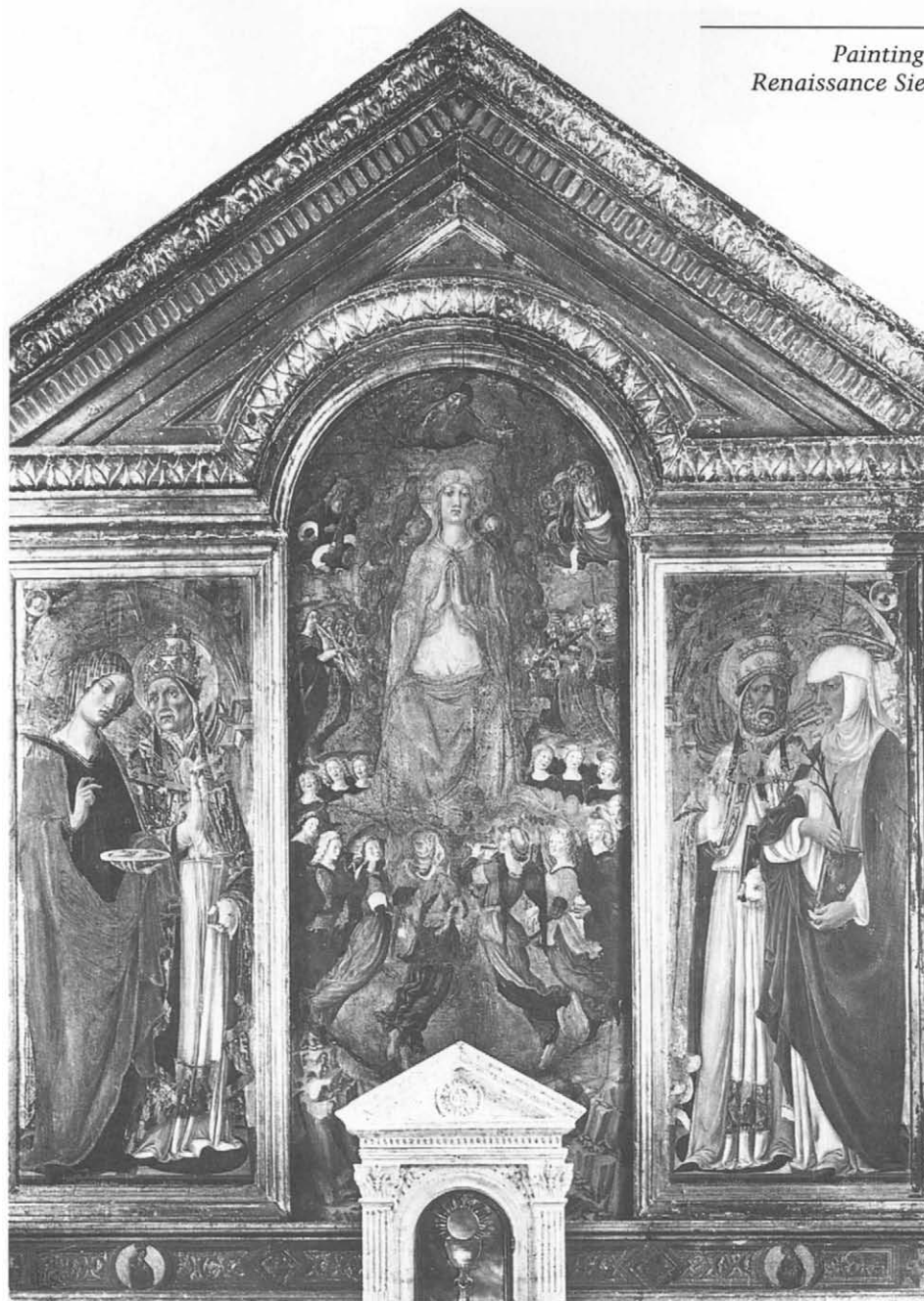


Figure 15. Vecchietta. *The Assumption of the Virgin*. Cathedral, Pienza



Figure 16. Vecchietta. *The Resurrection*.
The Frick Collection, New York



Figure 17. Donatello. *The Blood of the Redeemer*. Spedale Maestri, Torrita

the Redeemer (fig. 17), in the Spedale Maestri in Torrita, southeast of Siena, was, in fact, the common source for Vecchietta and Francesco di Giorgio. The work is generally dated to the 1430s and has been associated, conjecturally, with Donatello's tabernacle for Saint Peter's in Rome.¹⁶ However, it was first mentioned in the nineteenth century, when it adorned the façade of the church of the Madonna della Neve in Torrita, and it is difficult not to believe that the relief was deposited in that provincial outpost of Sienese territory following modifications in the cathedral of Siena in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. A date for the relief in the late 1450s is not impossible. There is, in any event, a curious similarity between Donatello's inclusion of two youthful angels standing on the edge of the lunette to frame the composition and Vecchietta's introduction of two adoring angels on rocky mounds in his *Resurrection*.

It may be said with little exaggeration that in Siena Donatello provided the seeds and Pius II the climate for the dominating style in the last four decades of the century. The altarpieces commissioned for Pienza Cathedral (see fig. 15, 18) are the first to utilize standard, Renaissance frames—obviously in conformity with the wishes of Pius and his Florentine architect—although only two of the “illustrious Sienese artists,”¹⁷ Vecchietta and Matteo di Giovanni, succeeded in rising to the occasion, while Sano di Pietro and Giovanni di Paolo attempted, unsuccessfully, to adapt their flat, Gothic figures to an uncongenial format. In the same way that Pius forced the Sienese government to readmit the nobles to public office, his family and associates sponsored, through their patronage, a new, non-Sienese style. In 1459 Pius commissioned a tomb (“of white marble from the Ligurian mountains”¹⁸) for his parents in the church of San Francesco. In addition to the epitaph Pius composed, the tomb included bust-length portraits set into shells—as occur on classical sarcophagi. This was followed, in 1460, by a commission for a family loggia. The artist for both projects was Antonio Federighi, who, under Pius's tutelage, transformed himself from a follower of Jacopo della Quercia into a classicizing sculptor of remarkable inventiveness. Possibly because of his success with the pope, in 1465 Federighi was hired by the commune to complete the fourteenth-century chapel on the exterior of the Palazzo Pubblico with a Renaissance

arch. Pius's sister, Caterina Piccolomini, built a new, Florentine-inspired palace in the city, and later in the decade a grand, Renaissance family palace, designed by Rossellino, was constructed near Pius's newly completed loggia. In 1470, Giovanni Cinughi, who had been appointed bishop of Pienza by Pius, commissioned the small, Renaissance church of the Madonna della Neve in Siena for which, in 1477, Matteo di Giovanni painted one of his finest works (fig. 19). Another associate of Pius, his financial administrator Ambrogio Spannocchi, commissioned Giuliano da Maiano to build the splendid palace in the Piazza Salimbeni. With this new wave of humanist patronage—which also extended to such objects as devotional books (cat. 59)—the Sienese resistance to Renaissance style was definitively overcome. The oratory constructed on the site of Saint Catherine's house, which was funded by the commune in 1464, received a Renaissance façade with a lunette carved by Donatello's pupil Urbano da Cortona. For the interior, Vecchietta's pupil Neroccio de'Landi created one of his most beautiful sculptures, a polychrome wood statue of the saint.

Only in this new cultural climate is it possible to account for the transformation of an artist like Matteo di Giovanni from the slightly hesitant author of the lateral panels of the altarpiece of the Annunciation in San Pietro Ostile (for which, see cat. 45 a, b), to the painter of the Pienza altarpiece, with its Pollaiuolo-inspired lunette of the *Flagellation of Christ*; the predella of the Placidi altarpiece (cat. 49 a–c),

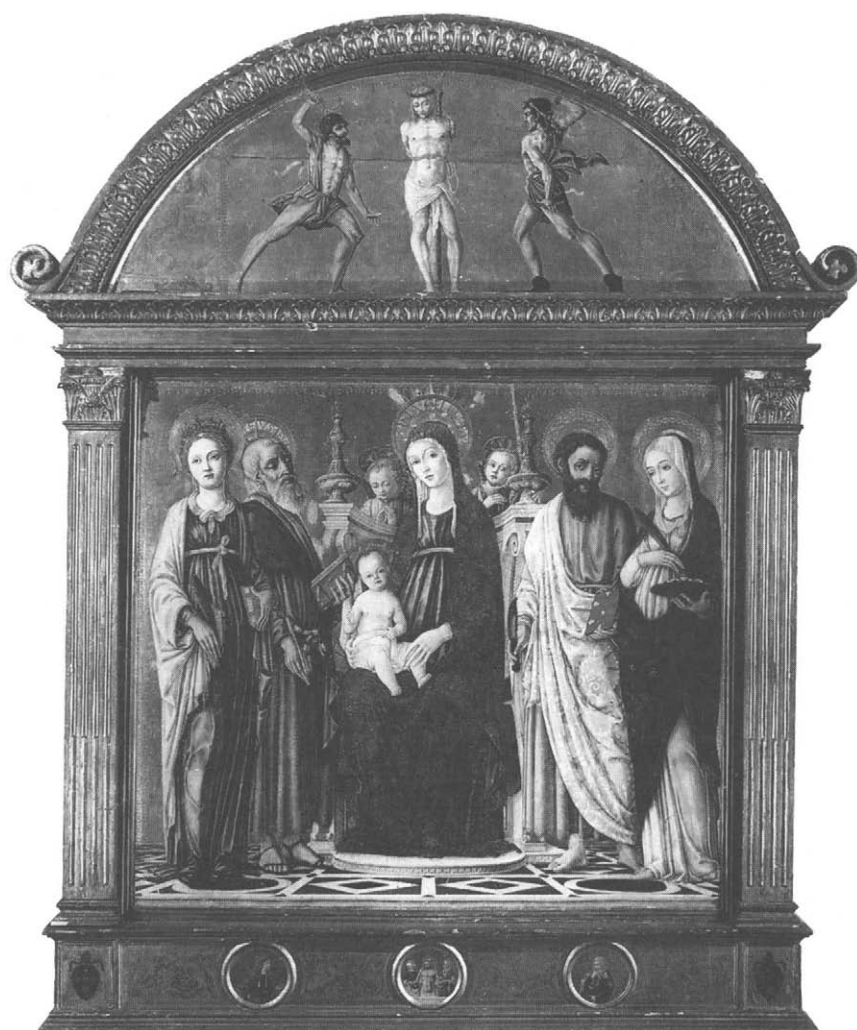


Figure 18. Matteo di Giovanni. *Madonna and Child with Saints*. Cathedral, Pienza



Figure 19. Matteo di Giovanni. *Madonna of the Snow*. On deposit at the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

with its implementation of drawings from an architectural model book containing reconstructions of lost Roman buildings; and the *Massacre of the Innocents* in the church of Sant'Agostino, in which the dense distribution of figures across the foreground imitates Roman battle sarcophagi.¹⁹ The picture that marks the transition is Matteo's altarpiece of 1460 for the chapel of Sant'Antonio in the Baptistery of Siena (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), whose central figures of the Madonna and Child derive from Donatello's marble tondo (fig. 13) for the cathedral chapel of San Callisto—a work that was to resound throughout the second half of the fifteenth century (its illusionistic frame was repeated in decorative tondi in Santa Maria dei Servi and in the Osservanza, and it served as the basis of a tomb design by Francesco di Giorgio: see cat. 68). The degree to which Matteo was influenced by firsthand contact with Florentine art may be gauged by the underdrawings of his paintings (see cat. 50 a, b), which employ the cursory, whip-like line associated with Pollaiuolo.

The relationship between sculpture and painting was especially important in the formulation of a new type of devotional image of the half-length Madonna and Child. No picture of this sort by Sassetta survives (see cat. 4), and those by Sano di Pietro are conscious revivals of fourteenth-century exemplars, created for a conservative clientele. Sano's single innovation was the addition of diminutive figures of saints and angels arranged like garlands of flowers around the edges. By contrast, Matteo di Giovanni's painting in Washington (cat. 48), with the Madonna and Child aligned along converging diagonals, the figure of the Virgin cut off at the knees, and the accompanying saints and angels carefully positioned so as to articulate the shallow space, derives from Florentine relief sculpture of the sort represented in Siena by Donatello's marble tondo—which may, indeed, have been the ultimate source. On at least one occasion, under the influence of Florentine painting, Matteo enriched this type of composition with a landscape background, but his preference for brilliantly lit forms and sharply delineated contours was ill-suited to the atmospheric painting this formula implied. Curiously, Vecchietta produced no such devotional images, although there are examples by both his pupils, Francesco di Giorgio and Neroccio de'Landi. In the paintings of these two remarkably gifted artists, one can readily trace the evolution from the conservative depictions of the Madonna and Child popularized by the workshop of Sano di Pietro, in which both artists may have spent some time, to the new, more sculptural type of interpretation. Especially in the work of Neroccio it is possible to evaluate the precise relationship of polychrome sculpture in low relief to devotional paintings (see cat. 69–71). Interestingly, in his stucco relief of the Madonna and Child in Chicago (cat. 70), the figures are set against a painted landscape background rather than the gold or notional blue sky he preferred for his paintings. This was obviously a means of enhancing the pictorial quality of the relief, which must have been viewed as interchangeable with a painting.

Sculpture opened a new world to Sienese painters, but it did not destroy their highly individual character. A preference for lavish materials, brilliant colors, and tooled gold remained enduring features of Sienese painting and are repeatedly stipulated in surviving contracts. This was, evidently, the product of a peculiarly Sienese love for pageantry and elegance for which there is ample testimony. For example, Gigli tells how the wife of Achille Petrucci, having delivered a Latin oration “with rare elegance and wit” upon the visit of Frederick III and Eleanor of Portugal in 1451, was asked by the emperor “what grace would please her. She requested that she might be exempted from the laws that prohibited wearing brocades and jewells. The which ambitious request, it seems, destroyed her reputation as a virtuous woman earned in the erudite discourse.”²⁰ In a similar vein, the bookdealer and biographer Vespasiano da Bisticci tells of a Sienese ambassador at the court of Naples “who was, as the Sienese tend to be, very grand. Now King Alfonso usually dressed in black, with just a buckle in his cap and a gold chain around his neck; he did not use brocades or silk clothes much. This ambassador however dressed in gold brocade, very rich, and when he came to see the King he always wore this gold brocade. Among his own

people the King often made fun of these brocade clothes. One day he said, laughing to one of his gentlemen, 'I think we should change the color of that brocade.' So he arranged to give audience one day in a mean little room, and also arranged with some of his own people that in the throng everyone should jostle against the Sieneese ambassador and rub against his brocade. On the day it was so handled and rubbed . . . that when they came out of the room no one could help but laughing when they saw the brocade, because it was crimson now, with the pile all crushed and the gold fallen off it, just yellow silk left: it looked the ugliest rag in the world."²¹

Both stories should be borne in mind when evaluating Sieneese contracts, with their obsessive concerns for the quality and luxury of the material an artist should use. In the contract for Matteo di Giovanni's altarpiece of Saint Barbara (fig. 20) for the altar of the association of German artisans in San Domenico, the artist was instructed that "the said work ought to be rich and large" with, at the center, "the figure of Saint Barbara seated on a chair of gold, and she is to be dressed in a mantle of crimson brocade."²² The brocade dress worn by the Madonna in

Benvenuto di Giovanni's slightly earlier altarpiece at Murlo may stem from a similar provision. In his treatise, Alberti correctly observed that "when done in gold on a flat panel, many surfaces that should have been presented as light and gleaming, appear dark to the viewer, while others that should be darker, probably look brighter,"²³ and he therefore condemned the excessive use of gold. Nothing could be more foreign to the taste of Sieneese patrons and the aesthetic of Sieneese painting, with its imaginative manipulation of gold to achieve a wealth of effects. There is no Florentine parallel for the gold brocades and silver tower of Matteo di Giovanni's *Saint Barbara*, or Giovanni di Paolo's use of gold in the *Creation*, and *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* (cat. 32 a), in which gold leaf was laid beneath the ultramarine blue sky, which was then scratched through with a stylus to create rays around the figure of God the Father; or the glazing of gold in the trees to create glowing apples and foliage highlighted with gilt flashes. The silvered windows in the interior scenes of Sassetta's predella panels (cat. 1 a–b) or in those of the Master of the Osservanza (cat. 10 a) and Sano di Pietro (cat. 24 b) are manifestations of this same desire to combine decorative splendor without sacrificing description. Unfortunately, silver tarnishes, pigment flakes from gilt surfaces, and glazes have frequently been cleaned away in an effort to revitalize the colors of a picture—or in a misguided attempt to remove the original egg-white varnish, which grays with time but is an organic part of the picture surface. As a result, the brocade dress of Matteo di Giovanni's *Saint Barbara* seems to have "the pile all crushed" and to be "the ugliest rag in the world." Only rarely is it possible to fully appreciate the subtle, descriptive effects of Sieneese painting. Perhaps the best guide is miniatures protected by the closed pages of the choir books they decorate.

In the fourteenth century the fame of Sieneese artists was international. The high altars of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce in Florence were decorated with polyptychs by Duccio's most faithful



Figure 20. Matteo di Giovanni. *Madonna and Child with Saints*. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena



Figure 21. Liberale da Verona. *Saint Martin and the Beggar* (Gradual: codex 28.12, f. 101 v). Cathedral, Siena



Figure 22. Girolamo da Cremona. *The Ascension* (Gradual: codex 23.8, f. 66 r). Cathedral, Siena

pupil, Ugolino da Siena, and both Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti were also employed by Florentine patrons. Simone Martini was summoned to the papal court in Avignon, where he illuminated the frontispiece of Petrarch's personal manuscript of Virgil, and frescoed the portal of Notre-Dame-des-Doms. In the first half of the fifteenth century Siennese artists worked in a geographically more confined area, although Domenico di Bartolo received commissions for two altarpieces in Florence and another in Perugia; Sassetta's greatest masterpiece (fig. 7) was painted for the Franciscans of Borgo Sansepolcro while another was commissioned by the Dominicans in Cortona; Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio illuminated a treatise for Siena's ally, Filippo Maria Visconti, in 1445–46, and he painted a processional banner for a confraternity in Borgo Sansepolcro in 1444 (the city had been annexed to Florence three years earlier); and even Giovanni di Paolo—the most parochial of Siennese painters—illuminated a manuscript of *The Divine Comedy* for another Siennese ally, Alfonso of Aragon, and painted at least one altarpiece for Cortona. Vecchietta's work for Cardinal Branda was somewhat exceptional in that it came about through the artist's association with Masolino.

By the second half of the century even this trickle of non-Siennese commissions had all but dried up, and the process was reversed. The exception that proves the rule is Francesco di Giorgio, whose talents as an architect and military engineer made him the most sought-after artist of the last quarter of the fifteenth century—a political bargaining chip

for the Siennese government—but who received virtually no non-Siennese commissions for paintings. In the rhymed chronicle composed for Francesco's most outstanding patron, Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, Giovanni Santi lavished praise on Francesco's work as an architect and engineer, noting additionally that the Siennese artist was an animated, speedy, and skillful painter. In his altarpiece of the Nativity (Siena Pinacoteca) of 1475, Francesco had acquired a rudimentary mastery of an oil (or oil-like) medium and a more carefully descriptive style—evident in the depiction of the pearls and brocades, the reflective halos, and the hands of Saint Bernard. This new technique was in all likelihood based on the study of the work of Antonio Pollaiuolo. However, at the sophisticated court of Urbino, where Piero della Francesca and the Fleming Joos van Ghent established the theoretical and descriptive norms by which painting was judged, Francesco's brilliantly eccentric and irrational pictures must have seemed strangely retrogressive, and his sole surviving pictorial work for the duke is a miniature showing Francesco with Federico behind a window casement (Biblioteca Vaticana, codex Urb. Lat. 508).

When the Olivetans at Monte Oliveto Maggiore decided to commission illuminations for a new set of choir books, the task was transferred from Sano di Pietro to professional miniaturists from Northern Italy—Liberale da Verona, Venturino Mercati, and Girolamo da Cremona.²⁴ The same artists were concurrently employed by the cathedral (see fig. 21–22), under the rectorship of Savino Savini from 1468 to 1475. Elsewhere the importation of foreigners to paint miniatures would have been of little consequence, but in Siena, where there was no hard-and-fast division between painters and miniaturists (virtually all of the great Siennese painters were active as miniaturists), these artists represented a real incursion, and their work had a far-reaching effect. Particularly Girolamo da Cremona (fig. 22), who had been associated with Mantegna in Mantua and who worked for an elite clientele, was of enormous importance in acquainting Siennese artists with a congenial but more progressive style that combined a brilliant use of color with incisive drawing and a minutely descriptive technique (see cat. 54 a). The embroidered pearls that cast starched shadows on the dress and the pillow in Benvenuto di Giovanni's *Madonna and Child* (cat. 60) in all likelihood derive from Girolamo's *trompe-l'oeil* border decorations (cat. 54 b, c). Girolamo's example seems to have led Benvenuto to examine engravings designed by Mantegna (cat. 62 d)—possibly part of the workshop materials Girolamo brought with him to Siena—and his work seems to have inspired Benvenuto's remarkable architectural setting in the 1470 *Annunciation* (fig. 23) in Sinalunga.²⁵ The affinities sometimes noted between Benvenuto's work and that of Carlo Crivelli stem from this second-hand knowledge of Paduan art.

The fertile exchange between North Italian and Siennese artists reached a climax in the first half of the 1470s: in Matteo di Giovanni's 1474 altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin (fig. 24),²⁶ with its dense covey of saints to either side of the Virgin and its deep, arid landscape punctuated by sporadic rock formations, geometric fields, and brightly colored walled cities; and, most conspicuously, in Francesco di Giorgio's *Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 25)—actually painted for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (Siena Pinacoteca)—in which the turbulent figurative compositions and dazzling color harmonies of Liberale's miniatures (fig. 21) are adapted to a surface over three meters high. Not until the sixteenth century, in the work of Francesco's great compatriot, Domenico Beccafumi, was the irrational visualized with such vivid cogency. It would, however, be wrong to suggest that the influence was all in one direction. Liberale arrived in Siena in 1467, a youth barely twenty years old and the master of an inventive but vehemently



Figure 23. Benvenuto di Giovanni. *The Annunciation*. San Bernardino, Sinalunga



Figure 24. Matteo di Giovanni. *The Assumption of the Virgin*.
National Gallery, London



Figure 25. Francesco di Giorgio. *The Coronation of the Virgin*.
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Gothic style. His nine-year stay in Siena and his work alongside Girolamo da Cremona, whose miniatures had a disciplining effect on Liberale's loosely structured, decorative compositions, were fundamental to his development. His activity extended to the production of altarpieces and, especially, of painted panels for marriage chests (*cassoni*), executed in a style that sometimes approximates that of Francesco di Giorgio (see cat. 57, 58), whose free manner of scratching designs into the surfaces of his pictures to reveal an underlying layer of gold leaf was imitated by Liberale. It is perfectly possible that some sort of association, or *compagnia*, was formed between the two artists for the production of paintings for furniture, for it is doubtful that Liberale could have created the classically inspired equestrian group on the most distinguished of his *cassone* panels (cat. 58) without intimate contact with Francesco di Giorgio, whose knowledge of classical art was profound. Liberale's miniature for one of the Monte Oliveto Maggiore choir books, showing God the Father appearing to Isaiah (Museo della Cattedrale, Chiusi: codex A, f. 4 r), in which the two flying putti beneath the figure of God closely resemble those in Francesco di Giorgio's *Nativity* (cat. 65), are further evidence of a close association between the two artists.

With the replacement of Savino Savini by Alberto Aringhieri as rector of the cathedral, the painting of choir books reverted to Sienese artists—Bernardo Cignoni, Benvenuto di Giovanni, Giovanni di Taldo (a sort of alter ego of Neroccio de'Landi), and Guidoccio Cozzarelli (see fig. 26)—but the gates of the city had been opened, and the tendency to turn to outside artists increased steadily in the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first decade of the sixteenth. Signorelli was employed between 1489 and 1493 by Antonio Bichi in a family chapel in Sant'Agostino (see cat. 74); the Master of the Griselda Legend—an associate of Signorelli—established himself in Siena during this time and was engaged together with Francesco di Giorgio, Neroccio de'Landi, and Matteo di Giovanni to create a decorative cycle of paintings celebrating the weddings of Antonio and Giulio Spannocchi in 1493;²⁷ Pinturicchio was employed by Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini on the Piccolomini Library from 1502 to 1509, and by Pandolfo Petrucci, the de facto ruler of Siena from 1487 to 1512, on a room of his palace; and Perugino executed an altarpiece for the Chigi in Sant'Agostino, commissioned in 1502. Petrucci's preference for Umbrian artists extended to Signorelli and Girolamo Genga, while Vasari records that Ghirlandaio decorated a room in the Spannocchi Palace with "many stories with small figures."²⁸ Without the presence in Siena of these artists, the work of Pietro di Domenico (cat. 75 b, c), Bernardino Fungai (cat. 76–77), and the young Peruzzi would be incomprehensible. Even Neroccio de'Landi, who might superficially seem the most impervious to outside influence, accommodated his aristocratic, self-conscious style to the new taste, occasionally abandoning the blond tonality of his early work for the brownish flesh tones that characterize Umbrian painting (see cat. 71).

Umbrian painting alone does not account for all of the novelties of Sienese art in the last two decades of the century. Possibly as early as 1475 Francesco di Giorgio entered the employ of Federico da Montefeltro as an architect and engineer. His ac-



Figure 26. Guidoccio Cozzarelli. *The Dedication of a Church* (Antiphonary: codex 26.R, f. 80 v). Cathedral, Siena



Figure 27. Pietro Orioli. *Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles*. Baptistery, Siena

tivity in Urbino over the next decade opened another avenue of influence, to which Pietro Orioli, the most progressive Sienese artist of the last quarter of the century, was particularly receptive.²⁹ In 1489 Pietro painted a fresco in the Baptistery of Siena showing Christ washing the feet of the apostles (fig. 27) in an architectural setting of consummate sophistication. No artist since Domenico di Bartolo had attempted such an audaciously complicated structure, and no previous Sienese artist had shown such a complete command of the vocabulary of Renaissance architecture. There can be little doubt that this innovative work owes much to Pietro's close association with Francesco di Giorgio, with whom he collaborated on a fresco cycle in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino at precisely this time (he may, in fact, have been engaged as a specialist in perspective, responsible for laying in the architectural settings). The *sinopia* of his fresco of the Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome (fig. 28) in the Basilica of the Osservanza, with its mastery of perspective and its analytic approach to figure construction (Pietro first delineated the anatomical forms and then clothed them), would have earned praise from any Florentine. Indeed, his *Nativity* (cat. 73) reflects his knowledge of Ghirlandaio's *Adoration* in Santa Trinità, Florence. However, Pietro's intellectual curiosity was balanced by a native religiosity. From 1481, he belonged to the Com-

pagnia di Santi Girolamo e Francesco, had close ties with the Osservanza and, like Sano di Pietro, established a reputation for his devoutness. This aspect of Pietro's character informs his depictions of the Madonna and Child (see cat. 72), which repeat with little alteration the formula devised by Matteo di Giovanni, his first teacher, in the early 1460s. As with so many Sienese artists, function and style were tightly interrelated, and artistic accomplishment never became an end in itself.

No survey of fifteenth-century Sienese painting, however summary, can omit mention of the enormous impact of Franciscanism and specifically of Saint Bernardino on the lives and works of artists. Bernardino's sermons, delivered before the church of San Francesco and the Palazzo Pubblico in 1425 and 1427, were communal events, attended by virtually the entire population of the city, and his peculiar blend of pragmatism and fervent devotion—epitomized by the cult of the monogram of Christ he initiated (for which he came under attack for heresy)—permeate Sienese painting. Pietro Orioli's close association with Bernardino's church, the Osservanza, was far from exceptional. Matteo di Giovanni, Benvenuto di Giovanni, and such minor artists as Francesco da Napoli, Antonio di Giusa, Jacopo di Filippo (a miniaturist), and Sano d'Andrea (a gold worker) belonged to the Compagnia di Santi Girolamo e Francesco founded in 1428 by Bernardino's close associate Fra Giacomo della Marca.³⁰ A lay group of Penitents (*disciplinati*), they met in the crypt of the Spedale della Scala. Matteo di Giovanni served as treasurer in

1463. Typically, the confraternity commissioned an altarpiece from Sano di Pietro in 1465 and a polychrome terra-cotta statue or relief of Saint Jerome from Neroccio de'Landi in 1468. Sano's association with the Observant Franciscans, whose principal iconographer he became, seems to have come about through his membership in the Compagnia della Vergine.³¹ There can be no doubt that his standardized devotional images, which invariably include a depiction of Saint Bernardino, were conditioned by their religious function, and reflect Bernardino's own admiration for fourteenth-century images, particularly those by Simone Martini. What is often referred to as the mystical vein in Sienese painting—insofar as the term can be applied to Sano's intentionally placid pictures—is, rather, the concomitant of a communal religious life shared by artists. The dedication of the painter's craft to glorifying God and the Virgin, expressed in the guild regulations, was, in this sense, no hollow phrase. Perhaps only in a city that so fervently believed it was under the special protection of the Virgin was it possible for artists to incorporate a personal invocation in an altarpiece commissioned and paid for by someone else. There is no parallel in Florentine art for Giovanni di Paolo's inscription in the halo of the Virgin in his 1427 altarpiece (Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena) that implores, "Virgin, protect this man who painted you" (HIC QUI TE PINXIT PROTEGE VIRGO VIRUM), or Domenico di Bartolo's affirmation, "Mother of God, Domenico painted you and prays to you" (DOMINICVS DOMINI MATREM TE PINXIT ET ORAT), on the scroll in his 1433 *Madonna of Humility* (fig. 10). Both inscriptions echo the one in Duccio's *Maestà*, blending communal and personal supplications ("O holy Mother of God, grant peace to Siena and life to Duccio, who has painted you thus"). Perhaps the most cogent testimony to a Sienese artist's devotion is Vecchietta's petition in 1477 to the Spedale della Scala, which had employed him over the years, for a chapel that he promised to furnish at his own expense with a bronze figure of the Risen Christ and an altarpiece inscribed OB SUAM DEVOTIONEM.

No less characteristic of Sienese art are the frequent associations between artists, sometimes to facilitate production of an individual painting, sometimes to share materials and commissions. The collaboration of Giovanni di Paolo and Sano di Pietro on an altarpiece for the Compagnia di San Francesco, already noted, is an example of the first type; the association between Francesco di Giorgio and Neroccio de'Landi between about 1468 and 1475 is typical of the second (it required legal action to arbitrate its dissolution). In 1439 Vecchietta and Sano di Pietro collaborated on a commission for the cathedral, and in 1445 Vecchietta subcontracted Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio to work with him on the reliquary cupboard (the *Arliquiera*) for the Spedale della Scala.³² These temporary collaborative enterprises and short-term associations (or *compagnie*) must have been even more frequent than documents suggest, and they had a long tradition in Siena; that between Simone Martini and his brother-in-law, Lippo Memmi, or between Luca di Tommè and Niccolò di Ser Sozzo might be cited. Without bearing this factor of artistic production in mind, it is impossible to understand a work like the fresco *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the Ufficio della Biccherna in the Palazzo Pubblico: The picture seems to have been painted jointly by Domenico di Bartolo and Sano di Pietro (over an earlier fresco by Lippo Vanni).³³ Sano's documented work with Giovanni di Paolo may help ex-

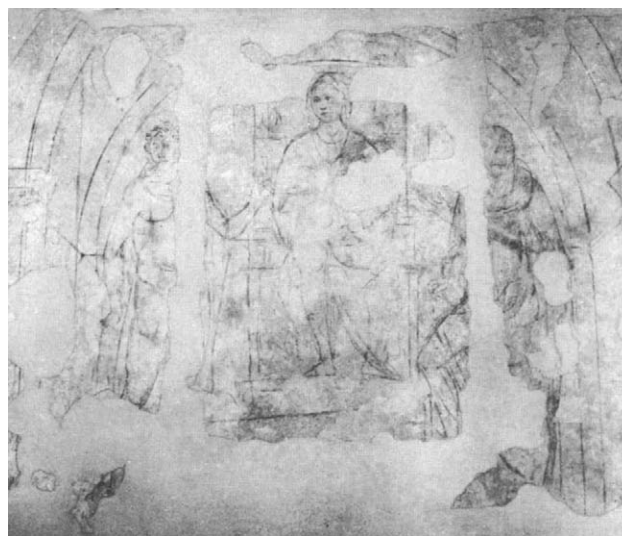


Figure 28. Pietro Orioli. *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome* (sinopia). Church of the Osservanza, Siena



Figure 29. Master of the Osservanza and Sano di Pietro. *Saint George Slaying the Dragon*. San Cristoforo, Siena



Figure 30. Master of the Osservanza and Sano di Pietro.
Saint George Slaying the Dragon (detail of figure 29)

plain the stylistic dichotomy of the predella of the 1449 Scrofiano altarpiece (Siena Pinacoteca), in which the landscapes in the two scenes on the left are indistinguishable from those by Giovanni di Paolo, while the figure style (not, however, including the drapery) is that of Sano, who, in fact, signed the altarpiece. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the most complex instance is that of the Master of the Osservanza, perhaps best understood as an enterprising artist who headed a *compagnia* that at various times may have involved Sassetta and Sano di Pietro. The tentative identification of this gifted master with Vico di Luca is based on that artist's known activity as the head of just such a *compagnia* during the 1430s and 1440s. The danger of being overly strict in ascribing a picture to one or another artist is demonstrated by the altarpiece of Saint George Slaying the Dragon (fig. 29–30) in the church of San Cristoforo. The altarpiece was funded by Giorgio Tolomei in 1440 and was completed by 1450.³⁴ Its disputed attribution to the Master of the Osservanza or to Sano di Pietro may well mask a more mundane reality: that the work was designed

by one master but painted jointly by both. The fact that there exist two predella panels by Sano di Pietro (fig. 31–32) in the Pinacoteca Vaticana showing subsequent episodes from the Life of Saint George—obviously part of the San Cristoforo altarpiece—strongly suggests that, as in so many other cases, Sano here played the role of executant (the figure of the princess and the landscape with the tree and castle in the main panel of the altarpiece seem to bear this out, although the figure of Saint George on horseback

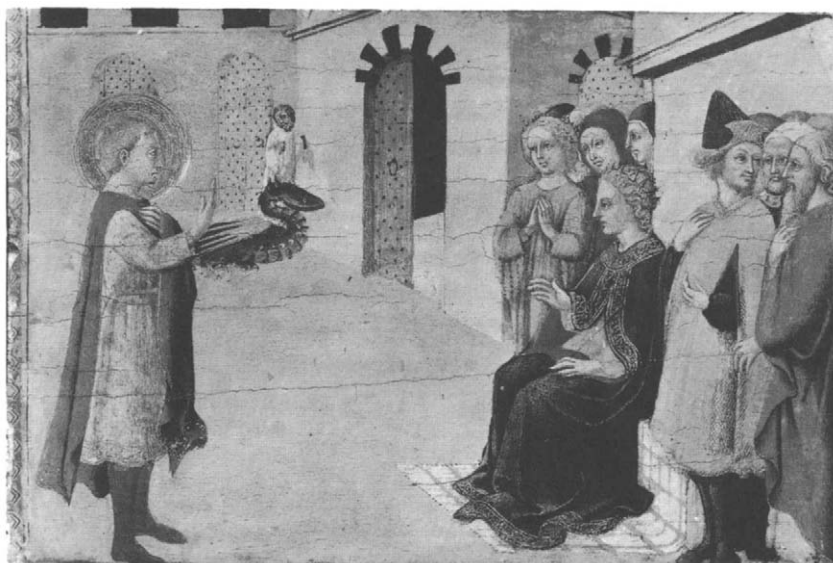


Figure 31. Sano di Pietro. *Saint George Preaching to the King of Silena*.
Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

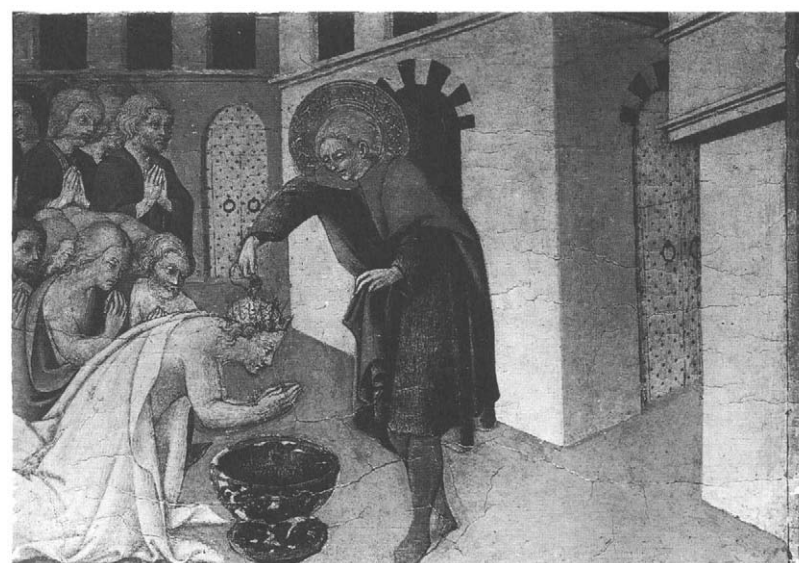


Figure 32. Sano di Pietro. *Saint George Baptizing the King of Silena*.
Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

is painted with a delicacy characteristic of the Master of the Osservanza). This example also points up the importance of reconstructing disassembled altarpieces. Such reconstructions may be conjectural, but they are a first step toward broaching problems relating to workshop production, attribution, and what we understand by "style" in the fifteenth century. They require sifting through technical, iconographic, and documentary evidence (in the case of the *Saint George* altarpiece, documents suggest that a panel depicting Saint Christopher, generically related in style and size to the altarpiece and currently installed as a companion piece, belonged instead to another polyptych in the church),³⁵ but in those complex, multipanel polyptychs that remained popular until the third quarter of the fifteenth century, the whole was far more than the sum of the scattered, individual parts. In the second half of the fifteenth century an equally problematic case is posed by the sometimes erratic, unpredictable work of Francesco di Giorgio, who seems to have headed a busy workshop, enlisting the assistance of a number of artists in addition to the formal arrangement established with Neroccio de'Landi (his probable association with Liberale da Verona has already been mentioned). The predella to *The Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 25), which was painted between 1472 and 1474 for the chapel of Saints Sebastian and Catherine of Siena at Monte Oliveto Maggiore, may well be identifiable with three damaged panels (Museo Diocesano, Pienza), formerly at Montisi, showing the Crucifixion flanked by two scenes from the Life of Saint Sebastian, painted by Neroccio on Francesco's design.³⁶ Moreover, in what is universally accepted as one of Francesco's latest works, an *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the church of San Domenico, Siena, the lunette is by Matteo di Giovanni and the predella by Bernardino Fungai, and although the main panel was designed by Francesco, it was painted by Fungai and an anonymous assistant of notably modest abilities.³⁷ This sort of procedure may have been a more common practice than is currently allowed.

In the *Della Pittura*, Alberti stated his belief that "the function of the painter is to draw with lines and paint in colors on a surface any given bodies in such a way that, at a fixed distance and with a certain, determined position of the centric ray [i.e., the vanishing point], what you see represented appears to be in relief and just like those bodies. . . . I want the painter, as far as he is able, to be learned in all the liberal arts, but I wish him above all to have a good knowledge of geometry."³⁸ Almost no Sienese artist would have subscribed to this highly focused, intellectual view of painting as mimesis. However, they would have recognized a common ground in Alberti's statement that narrative painting—what he referred to (with a humanist slant few Sienese artists would have understood) as an *historia*—was "the most important part of the painter's work."³⁹ It is certainly the area in which Sienese painters reveal their peculiar gifts (Berenson, in his classic essay on Central Italian painters, went so far as to characterize the Sienese—somewhat diffidently—as "among the most pleasing and winning Illustrators that we Europeans ever have had"). To a twentieth-century viewer the idea that the highest goal of painting consisted of the illustration of an idea or story expressed in words may seem misplaced, but it was unquestioned until comparatively recently. Even Sassetta's sublime image of *Saint Francis in Glory* (fig. 7), which we view primarily as a great religious icon, was intended to illustrate a concept expressed in the prologue of Saint Bonaventure's Life of Saint Francis: "[Francis] is thought to be not unmeetly set forth in the true prophecy of . . . the Apostle and Evangelist John, under the similitude of the Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God. For at the opening of the sixth seal, I saw, saith John in the Apocalypse, another Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God."⁴⁰ Sassetta has given literal form to this poetic vision, showing Francis, his hands and feet marked by the stigmata ("the seal of the likeness of the living God"), borne on the backs of three allegorical Vices across an endless sea bathed in the golden light of dawn. The power of this sublime picture derives, on the one hand, from the imaginative powers and aspirations of Sassetta and, on the other, from the specific requirements of clarity and evocativeness inherent in narrative painting. Nowhere are these forces more ex-

quisitely brought into play than in those narrative series from the predellas of altarpieces that are the focus of this catalogue. Sometimes, as in two of the scenes from Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (cat. 1 c, e), the source was verbal rather than written, and the emphasis was on the re-creation of a nearly contemporary event. At other times, as in the series by the Master of the Osservanza of scenes from the Life of Saint Anthony (cat. 10 a–h), it is the artist who has recast an established hagiography in contemporary terms. Again, a painter like Giovanni di Paolo may seize upon the spirit rather than on the literal sense as his point of departure, while for Sano di Pietro the Word was binding. With Matteo di Giovanni, a story might become the pretext for the display of more purely artistic interests. Regardless, the task of narration engaged the minds of Siennese artists in a special fashion and was responsible for some of the most captivating and fascinating works of art ever painted.

NOTES

1. *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope* . . . , 1959, p. 288.
2. Ghiberti 1947, pp. 37–38.
3. For the identification of the Fogg *Nativity* with the cathedral altarpiece, see Beatson, Muller, and Steinhoff 1986, pp. 610–31; for comments on the reconstruction, see Christiansen 1987, p. 465.
4. The appearance of the chapel in 1420 is known through a series of inventories published by Bacci 1944, pp. 163–66.
5. Bernardino's references to paintings are discussed by E. Carli 1976, pp. 152–82.
6. The dependence of Sassetta's work on a painting by Lippi was first posited by Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 33–34.
7. Whether the *Maestà* was framed by such a molding or by piers has been debated. The most convincing reconstruction is that of White 1979, pp. 91, 205. Curiously, Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* has never been used as evidence for reconstructing the framework of the *Maestà*.
8. Romagnoli [about 1835], IV, p. 422, writes as follows: "Colori pure nel 1438: pel comune una Tavola da porsi presso la porta del Palazzo, figurante M.V. (che è ancora nell'atrio dell'accenato Palazzo pubblico) pel prezzo di Fiorini 40: d'oro, come notasi nella deliberazione concistoriale del'16 agosto 1438: scritta nel Tomo 419 de' concistori a carte 39: nelle Riformagioni." See Borghini 1983, pp. 270, 426, doc. 324. In the margin the document bears the note: *Pro Mag.ro Stefano Pictore clarissimo*. The Pinacoteca *Madonna and Child* was owned by the commune: see Brandi 1933, p. 275.
9. Vasari 1906, II, p. 299.
10. See Fioravanti 1987, pp. 478–84. For the university, the basic study remains Zdekauer 1894. For an assessment of the humanist movement in Siena, see Fioravanti 1979.
11. Barely a handful of portraits can be even tentatively attributed to Siennese painters, and none of these can be associated with the more progressive artists. The portrait by Neroccio—now almost totally destroyed—bears a humanist distich and the sitter has been identified as a relative of the Piccolomini, again pointing up the importance of Piccolomini patronage: see Coor 1961, p. 59.
12. On Buzzichelli, see Banchi 1877, pp. 238–46.
13. Alberti 1972, p. 79.
14. The participation of Vecchietta with Masolino on the chapel in San Clemente is conjectural. Vecchietta is not, however, documented in Siena between 1428 and 1439, and a number of the figures beneath the entrance arch as well as passages in the ruined *Crucifixion* have close analogies in his later paintings. For Vecchietta's work in Branda's palace chapel at Castiglione Olona, see Bertelli 1988, pp. 297–303. His authorship of a landscape in the palace, usually ascribed to Masolino, is suggested by the architecture, which is characteristic of Vecchietta's work. On the humanist background of this exceptional fresco, see Manca 1987, pp. 81–84. Vecchietta's work in Castiglione Olona clearly predated his documented activity in Siena, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of van Os 1974, pp. 57–61.
15. Herzner 1971, pp. 161–86.
16. For the most recent discussion of the relief and a review of the previous bibliography, see Rosenauer 1985, pp. 120–21.
17. *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope* . . . , 1959, p. 287.
18. *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope* . . . , 1959, p. 104.
19. See Scaglia 1970, pp. 17–18. Who transmitted the drawings—known in three contemporary sets—to Matteo is not certain. Francesco di Giorgio is a possibility.
20. Gigli 1854, I, p. 71.
21. Da Bisticci 1951, p. 60, as translated by Baxandall 1972, p. 15. The incident was not unique. A second Siennese ambassador with an elaborate mantle was submitted to similar ridicule by Alfonso.
22. The contract is printed in Milanese 1854, II, pp. 364–66; however, according to Seidel (forthcoming study) the patrons were the German artisans and not the bakers' guild—although one of the Germans was, in fact, a baker.
23. Alberti 1972, p. 93.
24. Eberhardt 1983 has undertaken a thorough analysis of the documents and choir books. His study supersedes the earlier literature. See also Ciardi Dupré 1972.
25. There is still no completely satisfactory explanation for Benvenuto's acquaintance with a non-Siennese Renaissance architectural vocabulary. Bandera 1974, pp. 4–8, has emphasized the importance of Urbino. Interestingly, in Liberale's exactly contemporary predella scene in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, there appears a heraldic eagle in a wreath very like Federico da Montefeltro's device. This coincidence of date—about 1470—underscores the importance of Girolamo da Cremona in transmitting North Italian architectural motifs. Benvenuto was obviously attentive to architectural settings, since his frescoes in the Siena Baptistery, illustrating miracles of Saint Anthony, are possibly the earliest pictures to introduce the vocabulary of Bernardo Rossellino's buildings in Pienza. It is perhaps worth noting that a well-known cassone panel in the Siena Pinacoteca showing the Triumph of David and usually attributed to Neroccio de'Landi (except by Frederickson 1969, p. 45) can, instead, be ascribed confidently to Benvenuto. The coat of arms it bears are those of the Buoninsegni and Piccolomini. Only two marriages between these families are listed in the second half of the fifteenth century—both in 1459, well before Neroccio began painting (see A.S.S., *Matrimoni*, A 53 f. 548 v; A 56 ff. 273 v, 274 r). The architecture in this scene—Benvenuto's earliest datable work—is completely conventional.

26. Pope-Hennessy 1950, pp. 81–85. An inscription with the date 1474 was recorded in the nineteenth century.
27. See Tàtrai 1979, pp. 27–66. The association of the cycle with the Spannocchi remains somewhat conjectural.
28. Vasari 1906, III, p. 275.
29. Angelini 1982, pp. 72–78, and 1982, pp. 30–43.
30. A.S.S., *Entrata e uscita* for the compagnia, Patrimonio Resti 912, ff. 94 r, 99 v; and *Documenti, e memorie di diversi tempi della compagnia di SS. Girolamo e Francesco*, Patrimonio Resti 906, ff. 6 r, 19 v.
31. This aspect of Sano's career will be the subject of a joint article by Gaudenz Freuler and Michael Mallory, both of whom I would like to thank for sharing some of their findings.
32. Documents published in Milanesi 1854, II, p. 388, and Bacci 1944, p. 105.
33. The fresco is usually explained as begun by Domenico di Bartolo and completed after his death by Sano di Pietro. See Borghini 1983, p. 162, for a review of opinions. The division of labor suggests, rather, a collaboration: A close technical examination of the *giornate* may yield definitive results.
34. See Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 22, 35, notes 59, 89. Andrew Ladis [written communication] has discovered a document of 1450 in which Tolomei's chapel is referred to in terms implying its completion.
35. See Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 22, and the new document located by Ladis, which provides for the decoration of the altar of Saints James and Christopher. I would like to thank Alessandro Bagnoli and Cecelia Alessi for allowing me to examine these works in the restoration laboratory in July 1988.
36. Coor (1961, pp. 100–102) assumed that the predella panels formed part of Neroccio's otherwise complete altarpiece at Montisi, although Sebastian is not among the saints represented in the altarpiece. Interestingly, she noted the close relationship of style with pictures produced jointly by Francesco and Neroccio. Her suggestion (p. 99) that the work may have come from the Spedale della Scala in Siena, of which the castle of Montisi was a possession, is particularly intriguing in that Francesco's *Coronation of the Virgin* was deposited at the Spedale prior to 1840 (see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 238). The predella was probably separated from the altarpiece at that time and sent to Montisi, which is not far from Monte Oliveto Maggiore. The combined width of the predella panels is the same as that of the *Coronation of the Virgin*: 200 cm. Three scenes from the Life of Saint Benedict (Uffizi, Florence), sometimes associated with Francesco's altarpiece, have been demonstrated to be unrelated [see Torriti 1977, p. 394, for a summary of opinions].
37. I would like to thank the staff of the Fortezza da Basso in Florence for permitting me to examine the altarpiece in their laboratories. The shepherds, animals, and right-hand background scene of the Annunciation to the Shepherds are clearly by Fungai and are painted in oil. The principal figures are rendered in a careful, academic manner employing dense, regular cross-hatching for which there is no parallel in Francesco di Giorgio's work. The lunette, by Matteo di Giovanni, is of extremely fine quality. The picture is currently being studied by Max Seidel.
38. Alberti 1972, p. 95.
39. Alberti 1972, p. 103.
40. *Saint Bonaventure's Life of Saint Francis* 1910, p. 304. The image by Sassetta was the source of a scene on an intarsia bench in the church of San Francesco in Città di Castello.

ART AND CULTURE IN RENAISSANCE SIENA

Carl Brandon Strehlke

The social background of Siennese art of the fifteenth century has never been fully explored, and only recently has the political, social, and religious life of fifteenth-century Siena been the object of concentrated investigation.¹ What follows is an attempt to define the art-historical issues and to establish an outline for future exploration. Generally, research has centered on the fourteenth century, and particularly on the period before 1355, the year in which the longest and most stable regime, that of the “Nine”—an oligarchy of merchants and bankers—collapsed. The fascination of historians with this era can be traced to fifteenth-century Siena itself, when political circumstances gave rise to a historiographic conception of what it meant to be a Siennese citizen. The attitude is echoed in early historical writings about Siena (Giugurta Tommasi’s classic narrative of the Siennese Republic, published in the 1620s, ended with the year 1355).²

The greatest obstacle to the present study of Siennese art patronage is the silence of fifteenth-century writers on the subject of contemporary artists. The only two Siennese artists singled out in fifteenth-century literature are Angelo di Pietro Maccagnino and Francesco di Giorgio Martini, and the authors were not Siennese. The humanist Ciriaco d’Ancona praised Maccagnino’s two paintings of Muses for Leonello d’Este’s *studiolo* at Belfiore, near Ferrara, and described their painterly qualities.³ Ciriaco had connections with Siennese culture; he may have come to Siena in the early 1430s to visit the German king Sigismund. In 1433 Sigismund left Siena for his imperial coronation in Rome, where Ciriaco acted as his guide. Shortly afterward Ciriaco exchanged drawings and letters with the Siennese engineer and humanist Mariano Taccola, who was then trying to gain employment with the emperor.⁴ As the subject of Ciriaco’s praise, Maccagnino enjoyed a considerable reputation—in 1439 the Siennese government tried to have him released from a prison in Norcia (he was accused of homicide)—but none of his celebrated works survives, and no documents record his presence in Siena.⁵ Likewise, Francesco di Giorgio gained literary fame at a humanist court outside Siena—that of Urbino. In Giovanni Santi’s rhymed chronicle of about 1490 on the subject of Federico da Montefeltro, he dedicated several verses to Francesco di Giorgio’s multifarious talents in the fields of architecture, sculpture, and painting.⁶

Otherwise, Siennese art received scant attention in literature. In his treatise on architecture written between 1448 and 1458, the Florentine Filarete lists artists that he would employ to build and decorate the ideal city, and mentions several sculptors from, or working in, Siena.⁷ In Milan Filarete was engaged in the construction of the hospital. He knew Siena, which he visited in 1456 in order to study the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, and in the treatise he laments Jacopo della Quercia’s death. Filarete mentions the Siennese sculptors Urbano da Cortona and Pasquino da Montepulciano. The latter had been one of Filarete’s assistants in Rome on the bronze doors of Saint Peter’s. Among goldsmiths he cites Giovanni di Turino, but he ignores Siennese painters.

The Sicilian poet Giovanni Marrasio, who studied in Siena, employed Jacopo della Quercia’s Fonte Gaia as a literary image without mentioning the artist or describing the reliefs, and the Siennese poet Francesco Patrizi refers to the fountain allegorically as a place where he was taken by the genius of Siena, in the form of a majestic goddess, and thus he called it a spring sacred to the Muses.⁸ (The memory of an ancient statue of Venus on the old Fonte Gaia, discovered and placed there by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, and destroyed in 1355, may have inspired Patrizi.)

A literature of art did not develop in Siena primarily because government administration tapped the talents of local humanists who might have been inclined toward writing: The city was not considered fertile territory for *studia humanitatis*. This is partly because of the nature of the Siennese republican system of government. In the 1420s and early 1430s the university, or *Studio*, attracted famous humanists such as Francesco Filelfo as an instructor and Panormita and Francesco Pontano as students, but it built its reputation on jurisprudence and medicine, and grammarians and rhetoricians, the traditional humanist *métiers*, were poorly compensated.⁹ Siennese humanists pursued political careers. The Republic needed jurists, orators, and diplomats. While the city did produce scholars outside the law profession, and, for example, academic events like Francesco Patrizi's course on Cicero's *Rhetorica* in 1444 excited the local intellectual community, many men of letters complained that they had little time for study.¹⁰ Barnaba di Nanni, a biographer of Saint Bernardino, and Giovanni Tolomei thought of abandoning their studies altogether. Francesco Patrizi summarized the situation in a poem: "Goodbye to civil rivalries and worries of office seeking. As for the life of a lawyer, let my house be deserted, with only spiders for clients. . . ."¹¹ A Bolognese professor active in the second half of the fifteenth century also found Siena an impossible place in which to work because of the factions that divided the city.¹² When Pius II Piccolomini mentioned famous Siennese citizens in his *Historia de Europa*, he did not include any artists, but there are three jurists, Gregorio Lolli, Francesco Patrizi (also commended for his poetry), and Mariano Sozzini, whose funeral effigy (now in the Bargello, Florence) was created by Vecchietta.¹³ Likewise, in the sixteenth century the playwright Angelo Piccolomini perpetuated Siena's image as a lawyers' town: Jurists often appear in his comedies, which were set in Siena.

On occasion a humanist would employ an artist to illuminate a scholarly text. In the 1460s or early 1470s Sano di Pietro executed the frontispiece to an edition of Cicero's *Orationes*, written and owned by a certain Paolo di Middelburg (Vatican, ms. lat. 1742).¹⁴ The Paolo in question may be the Dutch scholar of the same name (1446–1534), whom Alexander VI nominated as cardinal of Fossombrone.¹⁵ He was known for his astrological studies (the Siennese Bartolomeo Benvoglianti cited him in a defense of astrology published in 1498) and for his reform of the Church calendar.¹⁶ In 1463 Francesco di Giorgio illuminated the frontispiece for a copy of Albert the Great's *De animalibus*, which belonged to Alberto de Sermonete and was donated along with his library to Saint Bernardino's Convent of the Osservanza. During the Siennese pope Pius II Piccolomini's reign (1457–64), important scholarly texts were produced in Rome, although sometimes Siennese illuminators and scribes were involved.¹⁷ Other cases, like that involving Antonio Bichi, a member of one of Siena's leading families and a humanist poet and scholar, are rare: He commissioned Francesco di Giorgio, Signorelli, and the sculptor Marrina to decorate his family chapel in Sant'Agostino (see cat. 74).¹⁸ His library was legendary; he owned a rare copy of Cicero's *Philippicae*, and had a reputation for not lending his books, which caused Panormita to complain, "Est enim carcer librorum Bicia proles."¹⁹ In general, however, "working" humanists in Siena were neither patrons nor commentators on art.

If this atmosphere did not encourage writing about art, it does not mean that works of art were not well known. Famous monuments were often alluded to in chronicles,²⁰ and because the commissioning of public art involved many people, and might even be debated in city councils, art played a leading role in the Siennese civic consciousness.

Contemporary Siennese painting may be ignored in fifteenth-century sources, but that of the early fourteenth century is not. The art of that period was revived and exploited to new political and religious ends in a way that parallels the rediscovery and application of the antique in other Renaissance centers. Two personalities exemplify this phenomenon: the Florentine sculptor Ghiberti, who was the first historian of Siennese art, and the native saint Bernardino Albizzeschi, who recognized and preached about



Figure 1. Interior of the Baptistery, Siena

the symbolic value of the most significant public monuments of the preceding century.

In June and July 1416 Ghiberti spent nineteen days in Siena for consultations about the projected Baptistery font (fig. 1) for which he accepted the commission to make two reliefs. He was in Siena at least two other times in 1417. The sojourns bore literary fruit three decades later in his treatise and autobiography, known as the *Commentarii*, which includes a long discussion of fourteenth-century Sienese painting.²¹ While his summation of the art of his native Florence drew in part on established literary conventions, the observations about Sienese art are original and constitute the first written account of that school of painting. Ambrogio Lorenzetti receives preferred treatment (even over the Florentines); Ghiberti does not simply list Lorenzetti's works and subjects, but describes them in vivid detail. Ambrogio's paintings excited the elderly artist's memory, and, indeed, Ghiberti's passages on the frescoes in San Francesco equal any humanist *ekphrasis*. In the summer of 1416, his discovery and championship of Lorenzetti would have struck the Sienese as inordinate, as Ghiberti himself affirmed

in discussing another great Sienese artist, Simone Martini: "Master Simone was a most noble painter and very famous. The Sienese painters maintain that he was the best, but to me Ambrogio Lorenzetti seems much better and more learned in theory than the others."²² That Ghiberti could write so much about early-fourteenth-century Sienese art (he includes Duccio and Barna da Siena as well) and form critical judgments that differed from local opinion attests both to his high estimate of this earlier art and to the value the Sienese attached to their artistic past.

While in the fourteenth century the historiography of Florentine art had introduced the concept of stylistic periodization (Cimabue and Giotto turned art away from the repressive "Greek manner"), no such self-conscious evaluation of a similar stylistic progression had existed for Sienese art. Ghiberti resorted to a Florentine approach by judging Duccio an adherent of the "Greek manner," and his art, therefore, as more archaic than that of Cimabue or Giotto.

Similarly, Pius II Piccolomini's few comments on art reflect a Florentine standard, and he always cites a Florentine example: Giotto. In a letter of about 1447 to the German artist and writer Nikolaus of Wyse, who gave the pope his portrait of a deceased friend, Michael Pfullenburgh, and a painting of Saint Christopher, Pius II speaks of the revival of literature by Petrarch, and of painting by Giotto, and concedes that literature and painting are equal.²³ By then this was standard humanist fare. Considering Pius's knowledge of Petrarch and the poet's sympathy for Simone Martini, it is disappointing that Pius never mentions the great Sienese painter.²⁴ However, he could count on even a Sienese audience's familiarity with the *Navicella* in Rome when he wrote to the Sienese government in 1439 and used the work by Giotto as a simile for the events of the Church council in Basel.²⁵

Ghiberti records the appreciation of local artists for the art of Simone Martini, but style alone was

probably an insignificant factor in forming the fifteenth-century Siennese citizen's conception of his city's artistic heritage. Politics and religion motivated the predilection for Early Trecento painting, and they perpetuated a style past its natural limits. In the fourteenth century a canon of images was formed that served as an established repertoire for almost all subsequent public art. These images—the altarpieces and frescoes by Duccio, Simone Martini, and the Lorenzetti brothers, all created before the Plague of 1348 for the three principal public buildings: the cathedral, the Palazzo Pubblico, and the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, as well as for the city gates—became symbols of Siena, embodying the values of its citizens. Iconography dictated this phenomenon: Except for Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco cycle of *Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico, these paintings represented the Virgin in Glory or episodes from her life. Because chroniclers considered the city's dedication to the Virgin in 1261, at the climax of the victory over the Florentines at the Battle of Monteaperti, a turning point in Siennese history, the Virgin was equated with the commune's liberty and independence. The fervor of the cult of the Virgin obscured any boundary between civic and religious sentiments. As time passed, the demand for art relating to the canon increased, and these compositions became prototypes for later painting. Ghiberti was, in fact, able to write so much about Siennese fourteenth-century painting because of the innate conservatism of the situation at the time of his visit in 1416.

In 1425 and 1427, in the piazza in front of San Francesco and in the Piazza del Campo, Saint Bernardino preached two cycles of sermons in which he employed familiar Trecento masterpieces to symbolize Siennese citizenship. In reference to Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, depicting the effects of Good and Bad Government, he said, "when I am outside of Siena, I have preached of the peace and war that you have painted, and which, besides, is a very beautiful invention."²⁶ Bernardino thus appealed to Siena's pride. He urged his audience not to forget its past and particularly its history of devotion to the Virgin: "But do you not call yourselves citizens of Siena? And the city is called of the Virgin Mary? How can you not have for her the most singular reverence? I know well what is inscribed on your coins: *Sena vetus civitas Virginis*—Siena old city of the Virgin—if you are from Siena, make sure that you practice what you are called."²⁷ Marian paintings from the fourteenth century were the most visible affirmation of his conception of Siennese citizenship; in the sermons he referred specifically to Simone Martini's *Annunciation* and to the lost fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin on the Camollia gate.²⁸

The government was quite concerned with maintaining this pictorial heritage. In 1447 the city magistrates ordered the restoration of a ruined altarpiece, probably by Simone Martini, in the Palazzo Pubblico. The decision to restore rather than replace the deteriorating polyptych is remarkable. Furthermore, Sano di Pietro was commissioned to paint a predella (cat. 18) consisting of copies of the scenes from the Life of the Virgin as depicted on the façade of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. These are the frescoes (now destroyed) by Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti that Ghiberti mentions in the *Commentarii*.²⁹

The fame of the frescoes was great. In 1456, the year of Filarete's visit, the hospital's rector, Pietro di Niccolò Bolgarini, wrote a report for Francesco Sforza describing the hospital, in which he noted that the frescoes on the façade symbolized the hospital's dedication to the Virgin Mary.³⁰ These frescoes took precedence over all other works of art, including the fresco cycle celebrating the hospital's work and history in the Pellegrinaio (fig. 10), completed only fourteen years before. Bolgarini limits himself to the remark that once inside the hospital, the sick and poor and the pilgrims would find "pulchris muris."³¹ By asking for copies of the frescoes on the hospital façade in an altarpiece for the Palazzo Pubblico, the civic officials visually confirmed the commune's control over the hospital.

Lippo Vanni's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Ufficio della Biccherna, on the ground floor of the Palazzo Pubblico, was another important Trecento picture that was restored. In this case, the restora-

tion meant a completely new painting, but the fourteenth-century composition was respected and Lippo's original signature and date were preserved. Stylistic and technical evidence suggests that Domenico di Bartolo and Sano di Pietro collaborated on the project, although Sano finished and dated the *Coronation* in 1445.

The maintenance of an artistic legacy was not the only manifestation of concern with the city's heritage. In the early years of the fifteenth century a new, ferociously republican, government asserted its position by commissioning artistic monuments in which themes relating to Sienese historical traditions, such as the city's dedication to the Virgin, good government, and civic liberty were mixed. The creation of a public image was a leading factor in these commissions: The reason given for the civic commission of the Baptistry font in the cathedral was that the existing font was "in a shambles and shameful as every citizen knows."³²

The political motivations behind this activity are also relevant. In 1404 Siena was liberated from Milanese domination, and the newly formed government represented a broad cross section of the population. After the fall of the Nine and before the Visconti gained power the city was ruled by several successive governments that were controlled by various groups, or *monti*, representing different social classes. The government of 1404 consisted of a coalition of all the *monti* except the *Dodici*, or Twelve, and the *Gentiluomini*, the petty landed nobility (including families like the Piccolomini), which were excluded from participation. The Twelve, the *monte* of the lesser guilds, and some aristocratic allies such as the Malavolti and Salimbeni had formed the popular government in 1355. Their absence from the coalition of 1404 was the result of their aborted take-over attempt the preceding year.

In contrast to the situation in Florence, in Siena the guilds, except for the Mercanzia (officially, the merchants' guild but really a type of commerce bureau that held tight control over the minor *arti* and had been a major organ of the Nine's administration), were not a part of the government structure. By sponsoring official celebrations of certain religious festivals and commissioning altarpieces, the guilds could make their presence felt in the public life of the city. This was the case with the Arte della Lana (see cat. 1 a–f), who, with the Carmelites, sponsored the feast of Corpus Domini, and with the Pizzicaiuoli (see cat. 38), who sponsored the observance of the Purification of the Virgin. Other guilds, such as the Carnaiuoli, the butchers' guild—one of the richest yet politically most suppressed—or an artisans' confraternity, such as that of the German immigrants in Siena, had altarpieces made simply commemorating their patron saints: respectively, Anthony Abbot, in a complex by Francesco da Valdambrino and Martino di Bartolomeo, and Barbara, in an altarpiece by Matteo di Giovanni of 1478.

The republican government of 1404 ruled until the 1480s. In 1456 it survived a major threat when a conspiratorial group allied itself with the condottiere Niccolò Piccinino. As a result, *Balie*, or specially appointed councils with plenary powers, oversaw the administration. During Pope Pius II's reign, some of the *Gentiluomini* were permitted to participate in politics. The system finally succumbed in the 1480s because outside pressures broke the fragility of internal alliances. The disenfranchised took advantage of the pan-Italian military conflict that endangered Sienese territorial rights and devastated the economy. In 1487, on the feast day of Mary Magdalene, the exiled *Monte dei Nove*, to which Pandolfo Petrucci belonged, reentered the city and took control. Petrucci soon became the de facto lord but outwardly, even under him, much of the administrative structure of government did not change.

During the first half of the century, a large part of the populace had a voice in communal affairs. Certain legislative bodies like the *Consiglio del Popolo* needed quorums of over 150 men, and elections were held every two months. Public administration, which gave the humanists no leisure, or *otium*, for personal studies, was an important vocation. The commune employed about one hundred officials, and many positions mandated short terms so that turnover was frequent. These figures must be balanced

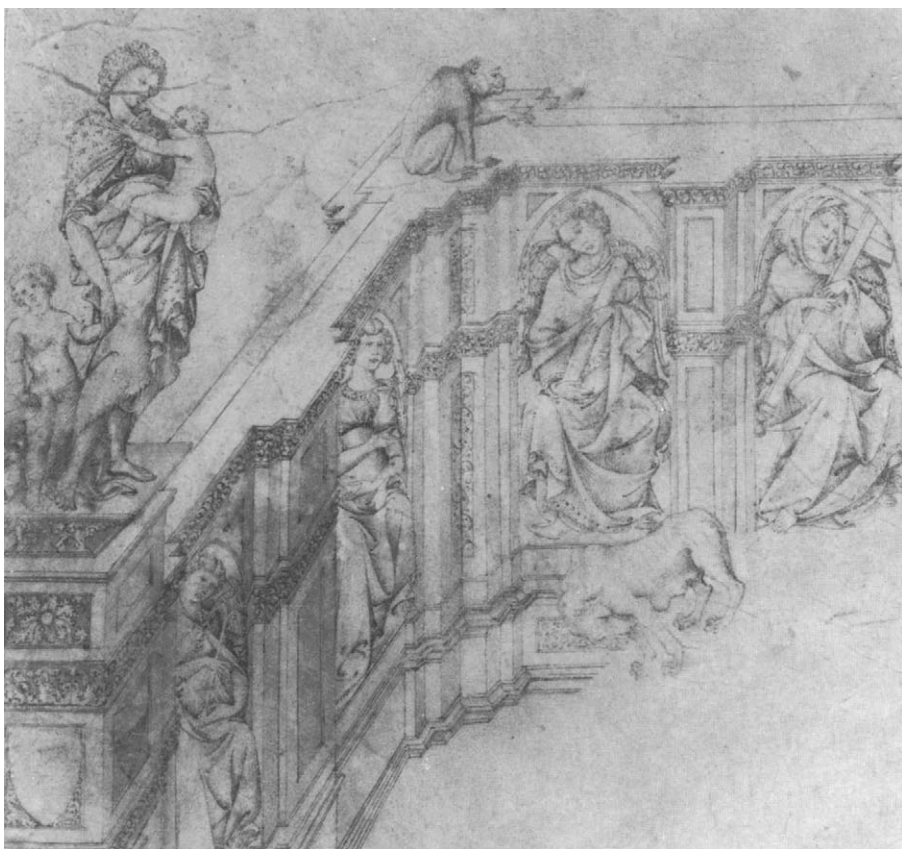


Figure 2. Study for the Fonte Gaia, Siena. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

commission—stipulated that the fountain should be made following a new drawing by Jacopo; an intermediary presentation drawing still survives (fig. 2). The final program mixes the themes of good government, symbolized by the enthroned Madonna and the Cardinal and Theological Virtues; human history, embodied in the reliefs of the Creation of Man and the Expulsion (in earlier plans these were to be an Annunciation group: the program became more ambitious with time); and Siena's Roman origins. The city's antiquity was represented by the two statues of standing female figures with twin children at either end of the fountain. They have been identified as Acca Larentia and Rhea Silvia, the mother and foster-mother of Romulus and Remus. The subject was controversial: In the early fourteenth century, the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani had asserted the primacy of his city, and claimed that the Gaul Charles Martel founded Siena in 870. While in the latter part of the fifteenth century the defense of Siena's Roman past became a local humanist preoccupation, the theme was an important component of civic art and symbolism in the early part of the century.

City councils did not doubt Siena's Roman origins. The traditional wolf that suckles Romulus and Remus was the municipality's official symbol, and a bronze statue of it was commissioned by the main council, the *Concistoro*, from Giovanni and Lorenzo di Turino in 1429. It was to be placed outside the Palazzo Pubblico on an ancient column brought especially from Orbetello.³⁵ Pius II cited the statue as proof of the city's antique Roman roots.³⁶ The later identification of this wolf as the one that suckled Ansius and Senus, the sons of Remus and the supposed founders of Siena, is spurious. While possibly current in the 1420s, the legend, known as the "Tisbo Colonnese," first appears in written form in the latter part of the century, and seems to be a humanist invention. It is only one of "numerosa leggende" to which the pope refers in the section on Siena in his autobiographical *Commentarii*.³⁷

against the population of Siena and its *contado*, or territory, which remained at a level of not many more than sixty thousand persons throughout the fifteenth century.³³ This was at a time when the two formerly most important capital and export industries, wool manufacture and banking, had greatly diminished, and the principal activities of Siena were agriculture and the maintenance of the city's territorial confines.

When the new government of a liberated Siena came to power in 1404, it soon commissioned several public monuments: Jacopo della Quercia's Fonte Gaia in the Campo, Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes in the chapel and antechapel in the Palazzo Pubblico, the font in the cathedral's Baptistry (see fig. 1), and Spinello Aretino's fresco cycle of episodes from the Life of Alexander III, an eleventh-century pope of Sienese origin.

The commission, contract, program, and progress of the Fonte Gaia were the subjects of several debates in the city councils.³⁴ Iconography seems to have motivated much discussion, and the program underwent at least three changes. The final contract, drawn up in 1416—eight years after the original

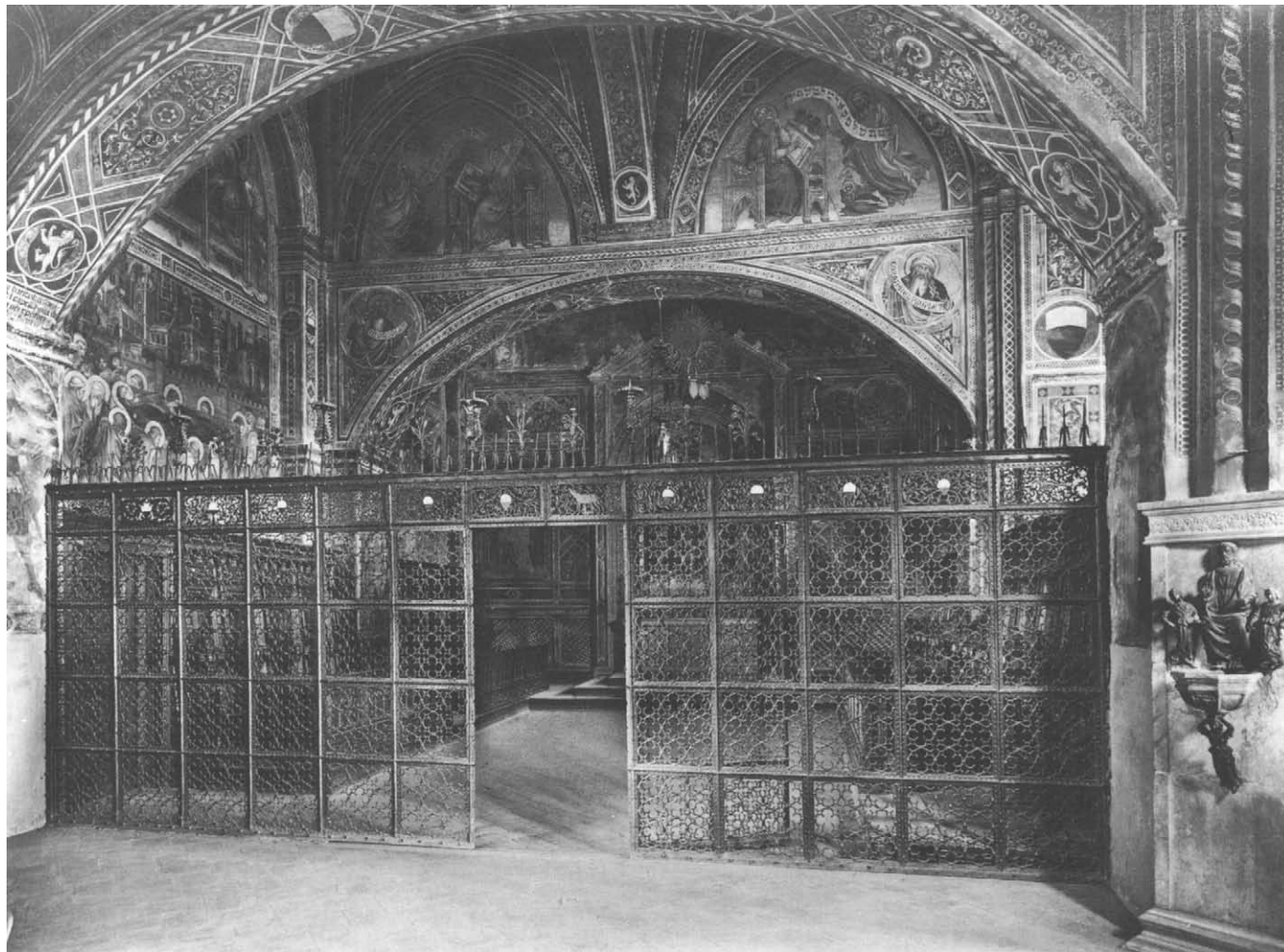


Figure 3. Cappella de' Signori, with frescoes by Taddeo di Bartolo. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

The claims of a Roman origin coexisted with the theme of *Sena vetus civitas Virginis*. Turin's Roman wolf was installed on August 15, the major civic and religious holiday in the city when the Virgin's Ascension is celebrated.

Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes for the Palazzo Pubblico (fig. 3) are perhaps the most important manifestation of this dual iconography. The chapel frescoes of 1406/8 illustrate events in the Life of the Virgin, and those in the antechapel, of 1414, depict Roman heroes. The antechapel paintings elaborated on the myth of Siena's antique origins. An inscription identifies a figure of the Roman Camillus as a founder of Siena. Furthermore, only republican Romans are shown. The frescoes are therefore a reminder of the recent liberation from Milanese tyranny. The free government that came into power in 1404 made its republican stance manifestly clear in a document that reads as a declaration of independence: "... The commune of Siena is obliged and must forever be and maintain itself in liberty and live freely and democratically [*populariter*] and rule itself and must never wholly or partially submit itself and be subjected to any lord, prince, or tyrant whether spiritual or temporal of any station, position, dignity or condition that exists in any way or at anytime, either directly or indirectly, silently or openly, nor welcome any superior, usurper, or any other overlord in any way."³⁸ In the antechapel frescoes, two figures, Caesar and Pompey, symbolize the dangers of tyranny. An inscription warns: "Look at these men and fix them



Figure 4. Sano di Pietro. *The Virgin Imploring Calixtus III to Aid Siena*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

in your mind, o citizens. As long as they followed with a common spirit the public good, Roman majesty put fear in warriors and the world, but when blind ambition rushed the two to arms, Roman liberty was lost and the senate overturned. . . ."

Iconographically, the antechapel program has a Florentine precedent: the lost frescoes in the *aula minor* of the Palazzo Vecchio, which had epigrams composed by Coluccio Salutati. Rubinstein proposed that the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni advised the Sienese on the iconography of the cycle, and informed them about the Florentine example. Bruni was in Siena with Gregory XII in 1407/8, corresponded with two Sienese humanists, Andreuccio Petrucci and Barnaba, and later, in 1437, donated to the *Signoria* a copy of his translation of Aristotle's *Politics*.³⁹ While he may have had an influence on the project, any of the many Sienese ambassadors to Florence—including Pietro de' Pecci, one of the men named as adviser to Taddeo di Bartolo on the program—would have passed through the *aula minor*.

The frescoes in the chapel, which were commissioned shortly after the establishment of this government, include figures of saints, among whom is Saint Pietro Alessandrino. His presence refers to

more recent events—specifically, the aborting of the 1403 rebellion of the *Dodici* on his feast day (November 26), which became a city holiday.

The city government often responded to current events by commissioning works of art. Painters decorated the covers that were used to bind the financial books of the *Gabella* and *Biccherna* at the end of each fiscal term. These covers commemorate, for example, the coronation of the emperor Sigismund in 1433, Pope Nicholas V in 1447, and Pope Pius II in 1457, and the elevation of Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini to the dignity of cardinal of Siena in 1458. In 1456 a painting was commissioned from Sano di Pietro for the Sala del Biado, the Office of Provisions and Rations, in the Palazzo Pubblico, showing the Virgin entrusting Siena to the care of Pope Calixtus III (fig. 4). The inscription reads: "O Pastor worthy of my Christian populace I give you care of Siena and ask that you render it all your human sense." The pope's response is also transcribed: "Virgin Mother, the Lord's dear consort, if your Calixtus is worthy of such valued a gift—only death will take me from Siena." The reference is to the troubled events of 1455 and 1456, when the condottiere Niccolò Piccinino was ravaging the Sienese countryside, and almost took over the city. His Sienese allies were discovered and either executed or exiled. The pope, an ally of the city and an enemy of Piccinino, was credited with saving Siena from ruin and famine.⁴⁰

In early-fifteenth-century Florence there existed a tradition of celebrating famous Florentine citizens in literature and art. In this respect, the difference between Taddeo di Bartolo's antechapel and the Florentine *aula minor* is telling. The Florentine decoration included figures of five poets, among them Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. Salutati had defended his program against criticism that there were not enough statesmen and warriors, and always stressed that poets brought the "maxima pars gloriae" to a

city.⁴¹ Filippo Villani included these poets along with artists in his Florentine chronicle *De origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus*. In contrast, Siena's *famosi cives* were not its poets but its saints.

Following the death of Bernardino in 1444, the commune became concerned with glorifying and consolidating the city's pantheon of saints and blessed. The government closely followed the cause of Bernardino's canonization.⁴² They dispatched ambassadors to Rome to keep a close watch on the proceedings and the sentiments of the Curia, and they judiciously had relics distributed, such as Bernardino's eyeglasses; these were given to Filippo Maria Visconti (even though Niccolò Piccinino also wanted them), who had sent letters testifying to the preacher's sanctity.⁴³ Anxious about the legality of the proceedings, the commune had a copy of the report of the commission in charge of the canonization of Nicholas of Tolentino sent from Rome. The large number of miracles attributed to Nicholas are said to have impressed Siennese officials. After over one hundred years, Nicholas's cause was just being revived, and would serve as a procedural model.

The commissioning of works of art did not wait for Bernardino's canonization in 1450; the man who had most affected artistic life in Siena during the preceding twenty years became the focus of artistic activity. Unfortunately, none of the many discussions that must have occurred about how to commemorate the saint survives. Within days after his death in Aquila, reports of the first miracles arrived in Siena, and some years later these became the subjects of paintings by Sano di Pietro (cat. 20, 24). The works have the immediacy of a current event, and retain the excitement that surrounded those first reports.

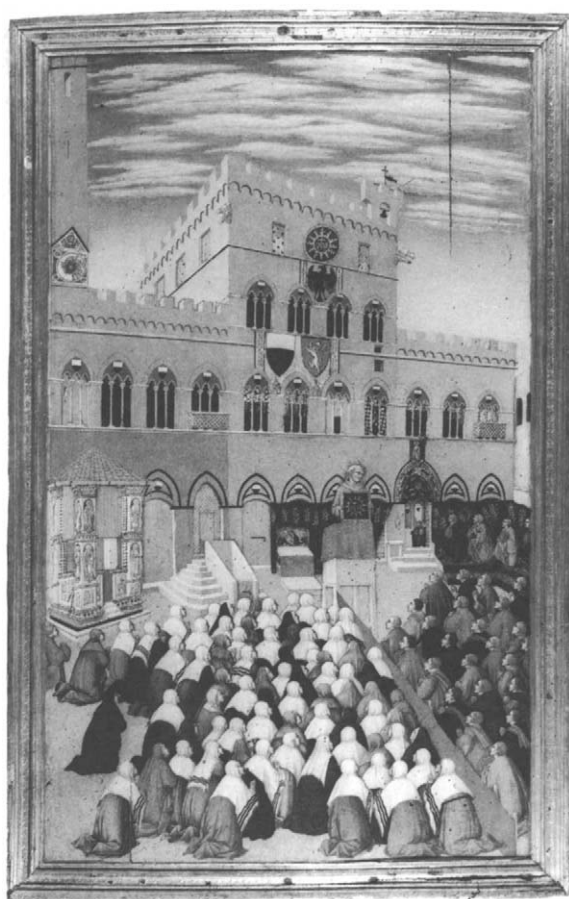


Figure 5. Sano di Pietro. *Saint Bernardino Preaching in the Campo*. Cathedral, Siena

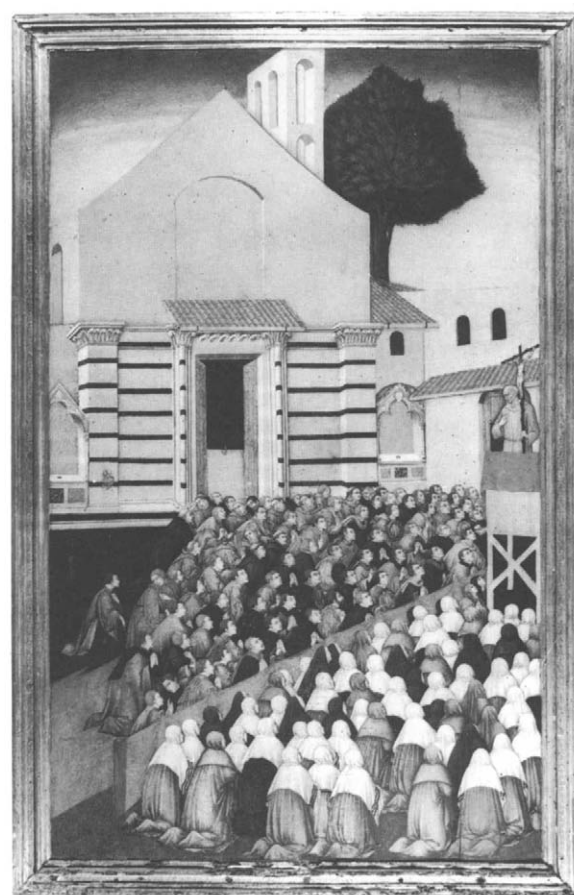


Figure 6. Sano di Pietro. *Saint Bernardino Preaching before the Church of San Francesco*. Cathedral, Siena



Figure 7. Pietro di Giovanni
d'Ambrogio. *Saint Bernardino*.
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena



Figure 8. Vecchietta. *Arlequiera*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Bernardino's sermons of 1425 and 1427 in the piazza in front of San Francesco and in the Piazza del Campo still fascinated the Sienese, and Sano likewise provided an official account of them before Bernardino's canonization (fig. 5, 6).⁴⁴ More traditionally hagiographic images seem to have arisen in response to actual occurrences: Paintings of the saint being borne aloft by angels record the pageant held in the Piazza del Campo in honor of Bernardino's canonization (cat. 46). More than any other figure Bernardino fostered the perpetuation of earlier imagery, but he himself became the new subject. It is as if his physical appearance encouraged realism in Sienese art (fig. 7).

The canonization in 1461 of Saint Catherine of Siena (see cat. 38 a–j, and also fig. 14, p. 16), long desired and promoted by the commune as well, gave Siena two new saints in the span of eleven years. They were commemorated in fresco in the main room of the Palazzo Pubblico and became the city's new patron saints, effectively replacing the traditional ones: Ansanus, Victor, Savinus, and Crescentius.

Saints Bernardino and Catherine also increased the prestige of the many minor Sienese blessed of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Vecchietta's *Arlequiera* (fig. 8) for Santa Maria della Scala, of 1444, and his fresco of the *Madonna of Mercy* (fig. 9) for the Sala del Biado in the Palazzo Pubblico are evidence that Siena was building its pantheon of *famosi cives* with holy men, not poets. The fresco of the *Madonna of Mercy* is not documented but clearly celebrates Catherine's entry into the Sienese canon of saints: She is included among the privileged elect of saints who lift the Virgin's robe. Nuns of her order, the *Mantellate*, appear in a group on the left, among the many portraits of Sienese citizens and officials protected by the Virgin's robe. In the spandrels of the arch are Saints Bernardino and Martin, the latter dividing his cloak and giving half to a beggar. (Martin's presence is an allusion to the charitable functions of the *Biado*.) In the inner arch of the niche are portrayals of the many Sienese blessed, all haloed and identified by inscriptions. It is an encyclopedic survey of local hagiography.

Commissions for civic monuments originated in the city councils, either the *Concistoro*, the main executive branch comprising representatives of the *monti* and appointed officials of the bureaucracies, or the *Consiglio Grande* and *Consiglio del Popolo*, the two large legislative bodies. Besides the commune, two other institutions were major, official patrons of art—the cathedral and the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. However, inasmuch as an autonomous city board, called the *Opera del Duomo*, directed work on the cathedral, and the commune controlled appointments to the administration of the hospital, including the all-important post of rector, these institutions can be considered branches of the city government.

The decoration of the Palazzo Pubblico was directed by an *operaio di camera*. The names of many of these officials are unknown or have been left out of transcriptions of documents, and the position itself deserves more archival study. The job mainly involved financial matters. For important commissions a committee or a single person was appointed. Hence, for Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes of ancient Roman heroes, two politicians, Ser Cristoforo d'Andrea, the chancellor, and Pietro de'Pecci, oversaw the project. Pietro de'Pecci was also a prior in 1415, when Jacopo della Quercia's final contract for the Fonte Gaia was drawn up, and he was related (a brother?) to Giovanni de'Pecci, Bishop of Grosseto, whose tomb slab in the cathedral is by Donatello. Further research may prove that Pecci was one of the principal proponents behind a style and iconography of the new Republic. In the case of Spinello Aretino's cycle of the Life of Alexander III, a certain Betto di Benedetto selected the scenes that were to be painted.

In the above cases, the decision about the artist had already been made, and the appointees were meant to advise him on subjects and iconography. There is one known instance when a man was delegated to find an artist. This was for the troubled project of a *Coronation of the Virgin* fresco for the Porta Romana left unfinished by Taddeo di Bartolo's death in 1422. On July 9, 1442, the *vexiliferius*, an elected official for the *terzo*, or district, of Saint Martin, Landuccio di Marco, a member of the Mercanzia, was commissioned to find the best painter ("meliozem magistrum pictorem potest"). It took time, and five years passed before Sassetta was given a contract. The document was notarized at the headquarters of Landuccio's own business, and he is called the *operarius*. In 1452, after Sassetta's death, Landuccio was still in charge of the project, and had Sano di Pietro assess the value of Sassetta's work. In the same document, Vecchietta represented Sassetta's heirs. In 1459, the painting was still unfinished;⁴⁵ Sano di Pietro later completed it using Sassetta's cartoon.

The *Opera del Duomo*, which existed as early as 1196, oversaw the construction of the cathedral. Its board consisted of an *operaio* (head superintendent), the *camerlengo* (the bursar in charge of finances), and four advisers known as *consiglieri*. The group met regularly: biannually about the budget, monthly about new projects, and weekly about operations. They kept minutes of deliberations and account books, which still survive. Nominations were made and an election held in the *Consiglio del Popolo*. The bursar and advisers changed annually. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the *operaio* became a long-term, and sometimes a lifetime appointment. This was a result of a power play by Caterino di Corsino that has been well documented by



Figure 9. Vecchietta. *Madonna of Mercy* (detail). Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

Bernardina Sani.⁴⁶ In 1405, when the annual term expired, a successor to the *operaio* was elected, but in the interim Caterino took advantage of a new provision, which he probably instigated, that if the *operaio* donated his worldly goods to the *Opera*, the position would become lifelong and carry the title of knight. Therefore, in contrast to the fourteenth century, when the turnover of *operaii* was frequent, a fifteenth-century *operaio* could leave much more of a personal mark on projects and the selection of artists.

The change underscored the political nature of the position. In the fourteenth century, only two artists, Domenico di Vanni, a *maestro di pietra*, and Andrea Vanni, a painter—both also politically active—were *operaii*. In the fifteenth century, the sculptor Jacopo della Quercia became *operaio*, but his tenure was a disaster that probably excluded artists in the future. An *operaio* was needed on the spot; Jacopo spent most of his time in Bologna working for another *Opera*, that of San Petronio, as a sculptor. Considering the political power of the *operaio* and the fact that only the politically powerful were appointed, it is in itself rather amazing that Jacopo, an artist, could ever have aspired to the post. The politics behind his appointment merit an investigation. The *operaio* had a *capomaestro* to direct daily progress on the structure of the cathedral—usually a sculptor or an architect—and Quercia, Federighi, and Giovanni di Stefano were among the artists who also served in this capacity.

The prestige and social visibility of the *operaio* increased throughout the century. As Sani has pointed out, they usually held important communal posts beforehand.⁴⁷ The *operaio* was expected to receive important visitors, and the official residence was therefore enlarged and luxuriously fitted out (examples of its tableware still exist).⁴⁸ The new Byzantine patriarch stayed there in 1443, and the mother of Pope Nicholas V was a guest in 1448.⁴⁹ Several *operaii* came from the city's leading and most politically active families. These included Giovanni Borghesi, Mariano Bargagli (who was exiled in 1456 for complicity in the plot to have the condottiere Niccolò Piccinino take over the city), and the Knight of Malta Alberto Aringhieri, son of a Roman senator, in office from 1480 into the early years of the sixteenth century. From 1456 to 1480, an unstable period when the *Balia* became the principal organ of civic government, the office was occupied for shorter terms and intermittently by five persons. A certain moral standing was required (in 1435 Bartolomeo Cecchi was deposed for fathering a child by a household slave), but political activism was not spurned. *Operaii* held other posts, sat on government boards, and frequently undertook diplomatic missions. Even the once-exiled Bargagli was reappointed *operaio* in 1466. Aringhieri, in his first year in office, had to escape to Florence for having taken part in a plot against the state, but this did not affect his position.⁵⁰ His patently pro-Petrucchi political sympathies have never received attention. During his lengthy tenure, the office was personalized; he became the first *operaio* to be glorified in the cathedral's art. In the frescoes in the chapel of San Giovanni, Pinturicchio depicted Aringhieri twice: as a young man in the armor of a Knight of Malta and as he actually appeared. The *operaio*'s power over artistic decisions is probably nowhere more evident than in Aringhieri's replacement of Antonio Federighi with Giovanni di Stefano as *capomaestro*. When the despot Pandolfo Petrucci made himself *operaio* in the first years of the sixteenth century, it was confirmation that control over the commissioning of works of art was a political instrument. Most of his orders were issued from the Palazzo Pubblico or his own house: "In domo et camera magnifici Pandolfo de Petrucci," as opposed to the usual "in domo habitationis operarii in canonica."⁵¹

According to the 1365 statutes of the *Opera del Duomo*, a Canon of the cathedral was supposed to sit on the advisory board. By Caterino di Corsino's time this regulation had lapsed. In a *Concistoro* meeting of 1405, Giovanni de' Pecci, a cathedral Canon and later Bishop of Grosseto, proposed a review of the old statutes, obviously in an attempt to get the Canons represented again.⁵² Pecci seems to have had little effect, and, in actuality, before the Piccolomini era the power of the bishops and Canons to influence artistic decisions in the cathedral was limited. For example, the fact that the bishop of Siena from 1444 to 1450,

Neri di Montegargulo, had Bolognese connections might account for the awarding of a commission in 1447 to a Bolognese painter, Michele di Matteo, for a fresco of the Crucifixion for the Baptistery. The bishop himself was not popular in Siena, and is recorded there only once, in 1445. Michele di Matteo temporarily gave up a commission at the abbey of Nonantola, near Modena, to go to Siena.⁵³ However, not really until the elevation of Pope Pius II Piccolomini's nephew Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini as cardinal in 1458 did a bishop finally have a formative effect on the direction of artistic policy.

A record exists of the meeting of the *Opera* in which the bishop Carlo Bartoli asked permission for the patronage of the chapel of San Crescenzo—the location of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Purification of the Virgin*.⁵⁴ In 1446 two Canons, the bishop's executors, hired Pietro del Minella to “fabbricare la cappella” (“build the chapel”). The *Opera* left it to the executors to oversee the work. A year later the *Opera* warned that the form of the chapel was not to be altered, and that only the marble steps and the bishop's coat of arms could be added. The decision caused some friction, and in 1450 Nicholas V even issued a bull reminding the *Opera* of their obligation. It was not taken very seriously, however, because only three years later an order was given to replace the Barlati coat of arms with those of the commune in order to glorify the *Opera* and the city.

With regard to the cathedral, the *Opera* seems to have pursued a policy against personal aggrandizement. The powerful Pecci family had a long history of negotiations with the *Opera* over their family chapel. They had already built one just outside the cathedral near the Canons' house, which they then were able to exchange for the patronage of the cathedral chapel of Sant'Ansano—the location of Simone Martini's *Annunciation*. The original exterior chapel, which was dedicated to Saint James, was in the process of being built in 1442, and although in 1453 the bronze doors by a certain Bastiano da Firenze were still not finished, the family, in the meantime, had transferred its patronage to the chapel of Sant'Ansano. In 1452 the *Opera* allowed the Pecci finally to place the bronze slab by Donatello in the cathedral over the burial place of their ancestor Bishop Giovanni de'Pecci, who had died twenty-six years before: “la tavola di bronzo della sepoltura del r.p. misser Giovanni Pecci vescovo di Grosseto ri-pongasi in duomo dove fu seppellito el suo corpo.”⁵⁵

Even projects like the *operaio* Mariano Bargagli's plan to establish an altar for the *operaii* went up in smoke after much delay, and because of unnecessarily long disputes with Jacopo della Quercia, his shop, and his heirs, the project for Cardinal Antonio Casini's altar was hindered for a long time. Possibly similar disruptions in the Canon Giorgio Tolomei's plan to finish the altar dedicated to the Magi, founded by a relative, Francesco Tolomei—a project directed by the *Opera* itself—motivated him to establish his own burial chapel in San Cristoforo, which, after his death, was fitted out with an altarpiece by the Master of the Osservanza and Sano di Pietro (see fig. 29, p. 28).⁵⁶ Work on personal altars rarely went smoothly, and the relative ease with which Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* was commissioned in 1430 and finished in 1432—an outside commission seemingly initiated by the friars of San Francesco and paid for by the widow of the *operaio* Turino di Matteo—is the exception to the rule.

It certainly seems that in the early 1400s any tampering with altars that contained classic fourteenth-century altarpieces was frowned upon. Besides the examples cited above, Pier Candido Decembrio, in his *Life of Francesco Maria Visconti*, relates that the duke wished to influence his relations with the Si- enese populace by having altars built near the relics of the city's patron saints.⁵⁷ This would have meant in the cathedral, at the sites of the famous fourteenth-century paintings. It is not hard to imagine how such a plan would have been received in Siena, and why it never came to fruition.

The *Opera del Duomo* did not only oversee the cathedral; as it was the most qualified organization, city councils frequently assigned it other jobs. At various times the *operaio* doubled as head of the waterworks, and even though an independent board had been appointed in the early stages of the construc-

tion of the Fonte Gaia, the *Opera* saw the project to completion. The other extremely important project was the building and sculptural decoration of the Loggia della Mercanzia.⁵⁸ This was part of the seat of the merchants' guild—the only guild accorded full participation in the government. Its directors met with the *Concistoro*, and it ran the mint and exerted control over the operations and regulations of other guilds. In the 1460s Antonio Federighi and Urbano da Cortona executed two marble benches for the loggia with reliefs of Virtues and Roman heroes that embodied the same civic themes as of the Fonte Gaia and Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes. As Taddeo's frescoes found an iconographic precedent in the *aula minor* of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the guilds' benches are a distant echo of the late-fourteenth-century fresco program of the Arte della Lana in Florence, in which the republican Brutus is enthroned surrounded by Virtues.

In 1404, when the new government came into existence, the necessity of maintaining peace with Florence was recognized.⁵⁹ Except for a brief period in the early 1430s, peace between the two cities reigned for the first half of the century, and resulted in the remarkable collaboration of Ghiberti and Donatello on the Baptistery font. Psychologically, however, Siena never shook its wariness of the ever-stronger neighbor to the north. In 1480, the poet and friend of Pius II, Jacopo Tolomei, raged against some Siennese exiles who went to Florence: "But who realizes, if one morning, /for having been taken, we find them here, and see everything go to ruin."⁶⁰ Siena's self-imposed isolationism could inspire much poetic elegance, such as the Siennese poet Saviozzo's verses: "It therefore stands like a flower plucked off the stem/languid, naked and bare among thorns/neglected in the world and poor and proud."⁶¹ Similarly, the perpetuation of fourteenth-century art in direct copies, and the continued stylistic conservatism of many Siennese painters appear to have been a defensive stand. Sassetta's move toward an International Gothic style after the completion of the *Madonna of the Snow* altarpiece in 1432—and, notably, following a brief period of hostilities between Siena and Florence—and Giovanni di Paolo's bizarre perspectival constructions in the 1440s bespeak a need to find a language that is distinctly Siennese. Even an artist as open to new developments as Francesco di Giorgio was prey to these prejudices: The compositions of the frescoes in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino, dating to the 1490s, descend from fourteenth-century prototypes.⁶² When called upon to give his opinion on how to complete the cathedral of Milan in 1490, Francesco di Giorgio revealed his sympathy for Gothic architecture by favoring a solution that followed the Late Gothic style of the building.⁶³ It is a remarkable statement regarding the maintenance of an outdated style, and an example of the respect of a Siennese artist for the Gothic past. The official commissions of one institution, the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, ostensibly militated against this view, and encouraged a modern, realistic style.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the hospital, the records of which date to 1090, grew to be the city's richest institution. Its vast land holdings in the *contado* consisted of granaries, essential for the food supply, and an aggregation of smaller, dependent hospitals. Originally, a group of *frati*, juridically answerable to the Canons of the cathedral, ran the hospital, but as its riches increased, so did clashes over control of the institution, whose legal standing was easily a point of contention because of the absence of an original charter. The commune took a far from altruistic view of an institution with such considerable financial resources and power, and its interest resulted in a gradual takeover. In fact, as with the *Opera del Duomo*, in 1404 the new government asserted its dominance and required that the hospital's rector be elected in city councils, whereas before the post had been filled by the cathedral Canons and the hospital brothers. The rectorship became a city office, and the rector attended *Concistoro* meetings. Carlo d'Agnolino Bartoli was the first important rector in the fifteenth century. Assuming office in 1410, he left in 1427, following his nomination as bishop of the city. His plans for expansion, which put many small territorial hospitals under the Spedale's direct administration, caused a fiscal crisis in the

late 1420s. The commune nominated a governing board called the *Savi* to review the finances in 1428, and in 1433 issued an ordinance that consolidated its control over the organization, making clear its value to the city as a whole: "Such as it is that the ancient governors of this city have always had an eye to the conservation and growth of the pious and religious House of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, because that gives great honor to our city, and has in times past enjoyed good and great fame among all Christian nations . . . and as it is seen and talked of and written that the state of the said Hospital, which is that which has been reported threatens shame on the city and on the said ruined house. . . ." ⁶⁴ Similarly, in sermons Bernardino stressed the fame of the hospital: "And because I go around a lot, I also hear what is said. And God wishes that this hospital had the reputation that it once had." ⁶⁵ He compared its importance to that of the cathedral, located across the square: "I remind you that [the hospital] is one of the eyes of your city, and the other eye is the Bishopric: they do well tied one to the other. The right eye is the Bishopric, and the left is the Hospital: and the nose is the piazza in between. See how long is the nose. O, citizens, take care of the Hospital! Do so that it can maintain its charities continually. . . ." ⁶⁶ The simile stuck, and in 1452 Agostino Dati would use it in his oration on the occasion of the entry of Emperor Frederick III into the city. ⁶⁷

The hospital's fame cannot be belittled. Throughout Europe it was viewed as the ideal institution of its kind. In 1399 Gian Galeazzo Visconti asked for a copy of its regulations, and in 1401 he declared that the hospital of Milan should be governed on the Sienese model. In 1413 Emperor Sigismund made a similar request and in 1458, when the hospital of Milan was under construction, Francesco Visconti requested a description of the hospital and an account of its finances. After the troubles of the 1420s and early 1430s, the rector Niccolò di Galgano Bichi resigned, and Giovanni di Francesco Buzzichelli took his place. Buzzichelli soon initiated an art program intended to glorify the hospital's past fame and illustrate its numerous charitable activities, which were now being regulated by the commune itself (although in the past the commune took an interest in the hospital's property, the document of 1433 makes clear that it was also safeguarding the institution's munificent responsibilities).

The frescoes in the Pellegrinaio (fig. 10), executed between 1439 and 1444 in a space that was used as a reception room and a male infirmary, were the centerpiece of Buzzichelli's program. The paintings constitute the hospital's equivalent of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Good and Bad Government*. Unlike the nearly contemporary *Last Judgment* by Rogier van der Weyden in the hospital in Beaune, this cycle does not ask the institution's beneficiaries to dwell on the next world, but reminds them of the good care that Siena is assuring them in this one.

In the late 1430s several conservative artists decorated the vaults with figures of saints. It was soon discovered that their dry Late Trecento style would not do, and the narrative scenes on the walls were



Figure 10. General view of the Pellegrinaio, Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Siena



Figure 11. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Care of the Sick*. Spedale della Scala, Siena



Figure 12. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Reception of Pilgrims and the Distribution of Alms* (detail). Spedale della Scala, Siena

entrusted to Siena's most progressive artists, Domenico di Bartolo and Vecchietta. These artists had worked outside Siena and were the most open to a realistic, Florentine style that Buzzichelli must have realized was required to give form to his intentions for the room. In the 1430s Buzzichelli is known to have been in Florence regarding the affairs of a dependent hospital, San Martino alla Scala, which is where his ideas about the style he wanted to present in Siena were formed.⁶⁸ Domenico Veneziano's frescoes for Sant'Egidio, the church of Florence's main hospital, were contemporaneous with those of the Pellegrinaio. Domenico di Bartolo seems to have been aware of the cycle in Florence. In 1438 he could have met Domenico Veneziano in Perugia, where that artist worked in the palace of the Baglioni on a fresco cycle of Famous Men. Pandolfo Baglioni's marriage to a Sienese noblewoman, Pantasilea di Cocco Salimbeni, in 1436 may have made artistic contacts between the painters and the two cities closer than has previously been acknowledged.⁶⁹

The right and left walls were divided, respectively, into scenes of contemporary episodes and historical and allegorical events. The four frescoes on the right wall by Domenico di Bartolo represent the charitable activities of the hospital as set down in its statutes: the care of the sick (fig. 11), the reception of pilgrims and the distribution of bread (fig. 12), the nursing and education of orphans and the marriage of a poor girl whose dowry was provided by the hospital (fig. 13), and the feeding of the poor (fig. 14). The first three scenes are contemporaneous with two on the left wall: the fresco by Vecchietta representing an allegory of Christian education, completed in 1441 (fig. 15), and Priamo della Quercia's *Investiture of the Rector in an Augustinian Habit* (the rule of the friars and lay oblates was written by the Augustinian Blessed Agostino Novello in the early fourteenth century), finished in 1442 (fig. 16). Quercia's fresco probably followed a design by Domenico di Bartolo.

In 1442 Domenico painted on the left wall *Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges* (fig. 17), an event of 1193. The date of 1442 appears on the scroll that the pope holds, signifying that the fresco



Figure 13. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Raising of Foundlings*. Spedale della Scala, Siena

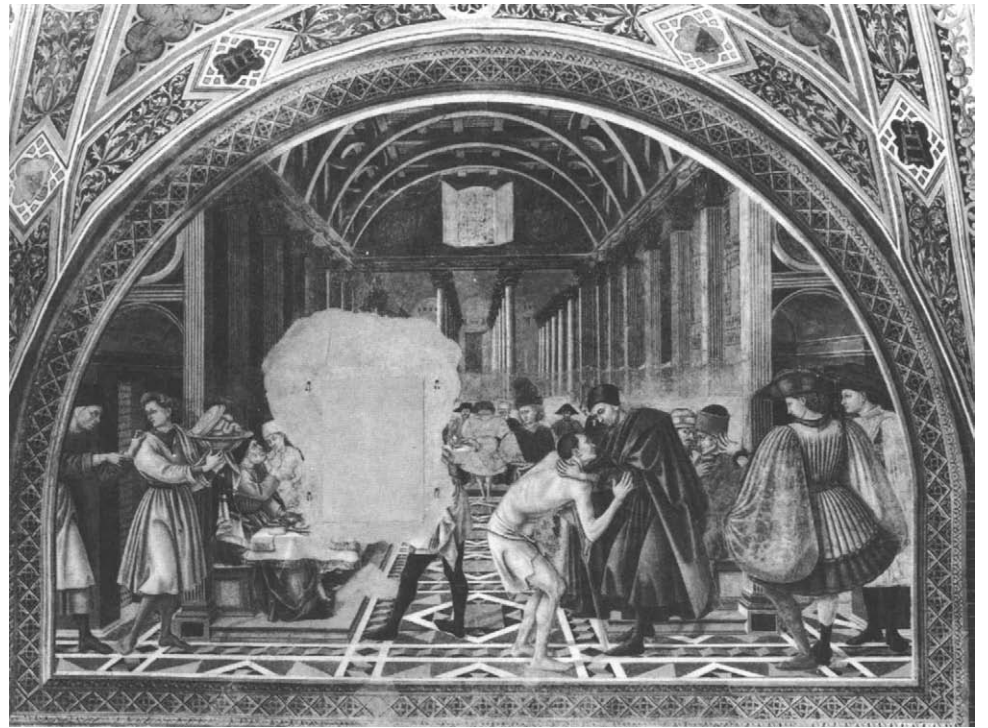


Figure 14. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Feeding of the Poor*. Spedale della Scala, Siena

was begun before March 25, 1443 (in the Sienese calendar the new year commenced on March 25). Contemporary events mandated a speedy execution of this fresco. The ecumenical council of the Eastern and Western Churches was concluding, and a visit by Pope Eugenius IV was planned. He stayed in Siena from March to September 1443. Arrangements for his arrival were implemented as early as June 1441, when a temporary structure was put up in the cathedral square because “s’aspettava papa Ugieno.” This baldachin, described in the chronicles, is represented in Priamo della Quercia’s fresco, which also shows the front steps of the cathedral.

The scene of a papal indulgence may have been planned to illustrate the munificence of Eugenius’s predecessors toward the hospital, especially since ten years earlier Eugenius had ruled against the hospital with regard to one of their Florentine dependencies—the Compagnia dei Fanciulli della Natività—because of the “incuria” of the Sienese rectors.⁷⁰ The scene recalls the international atmosphere of Florence during the council, and of Siena during the pope’s visit; many figures are represented in foreign or Byzantine costume. Domenico di Bartolo’s *The Building of the Hospital with the Donation of Alms from the Cathedral Canons* of 1443 (fig. 18) and *The Feeding of the Poor* (on the right wall), finished in 1444, completed the cycle (see fig. 14).

The differences in style between Domenico di Bartolo’s frescoes on the left and right walls is significant. The right wall shows the charitable events taking place either in actual rooms of the hospital, which are carefully constructed spatially, or in believable Renaissance-style architectural environments. The architectural settings of the two historical scenes on the left wall are fantastical amalgamations of Gothic and Renaissance elements. The atmosphere is frenetic, and many of the details of the figure groupings are bizarre and unreal. As Pope-Hennessy has noted, they seem to violate all the rules Alberti laid out for the painting of *historia*.

The variation in manner was intentional, because in *The Feeding of the Poor* (fig. 14) on the right



Figure 15. Vecchietta. *Allegory of the Origins of the Spedale della Scala*. Spedale della Scala, Siena



Figure 16. Priamo della Quercia. *The Rector Invested with the Augustinian Habit*. Spedale della Scala, Siena

wall, which postdates the two “history” frescoes, the artist returned to a more sober style. The differences must be attributed to the subject matter and the difficulty Domenico di Bartolo had imagining vague and distant historical events as opposed to actual hospital life.

The style of Domenico di Bartolo’s fresco cycle constitutes a mixture of the Late Gothic, in a vein reminiscent of Pisanello (from whom there are, in fact, some direct quotes), and Florentine realism. The “history” frescoes even seem to anticipate the peculiarities of later Ferrarese Quattrocento painting. Domenico’s experiences in Perugia, a city whose ruling family, the Baglioni, wished to emulate life at court, and in Florence, where he painted an altarpiece for the Carmine (cat. 41), contributed much to his style, but specific Sienese connections with North Italian culture should also be investigated.

Relations between Ferrara and Siena were actually quite close. Jacopo della Quercia worked in Ferrara several times in the course of his career, and the architect Giovanni da Siena built fortresses for the Este. Saint Bernardino appears to have attended some Greek classes given by the humanist Guarino, who was a resident of Ferrara from 1429. Alberto da Sarteano, Bernardino’s follower, was a documented student of Guarino. The latter’s praise of Pisanello assured that painter’s status as Italy’s most famous artist, and the humanist created the program for Leonello d’Este’s *studiolo* at Belfiore as well, on which the mysterious Sienese painter Maccagnino worked.

Blood relations were also close. A Sienese Tolomei was the mother of Leonello and Borso d’Este. Borso passed through Siena in 1439 on his way to the Baths of Petriolo, and in his entourage was one of Siena’s most celebrated physicians and men of letters, Ugo Benzi, who, for a long time, had worked for the Este. Members of the exiled Salimbeni appear to have found refuge in Ferrara. Maccagnino made a certain Anselmo Salimbeni his universal heir.

Maccagnino’s work is not known, but Benati’s tentative suggestion of a rapport between him and the painter of the Ferrarese *desco* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is borne out in the similarity of



Figure 17. Domenico di Bartolo. *Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges*. Spedale della Scala, Siena



Figure 18. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Building of the Hospital*. Spedale della Scala, Siena

the architectural constructions to those of Domenico di Bartolo's *historie* in the Pellegrinaio.⁷¹ Neither has the documented presence in Siena of the Pisanello follower Bono da Ferrara in 1441–42 and then again in 1461 been taken seriously in the literature, but it suggests an explanation for Domenico di Bartolo's direct quotations from Pisanello. Bono could well have provided model books.⁷²

Pius II's cathedral in Pienza (fig. 19), built in emulation of a German *Hallenkirche*, which Pius had seen in Northern Europe, epitomizes the Sienese appreciation for Late Gothic art. This sympathy was all-pervasive in Siena, and one of its most apparent manifestations is the hiring by the commune in 1442 of a Flemish master, Giachetto di Benedetto, for a period of ten years to produce tapestries for the Palazzo Pubblico and to teach the art. It was not the first instance of Flemish influence. A few years earlier another Fleming, Renaldo di Gualtieri, had petitioned the *Signoria* to do the same.⁷³ The particular Gothicisms that begin to appear in the paintings of Sassetta and Giovanni di Paolo of the 1440s—specifically, the angularity of their landscape backgrounds, like collages, and the irrational relationship of figures to architecture—might have come from their attraction to Flemish art. In addition, the iconographic program of Vecchietta's frescoes in the reliquary chapel of the hospital (fig. 20), in which the articles of the Creed are linked with Old Testament scenes, has a precedent in Flemish tapestries of the Creed.⁷⁴ Unlike Leonello d'Este, who is reputed in Angelo Decembrio's dialogue, *De politia litteraria*, not to have appreciated Northern tapestries, calling them clumsy and the weavers more concerned with opulence and frivolous charm than with the science of painting, Pius II was an assiduous patron.⁷⁵ Giachetto left Siena in 1456 to work for Nicholas V, and later entered Pius's workshops. Pius sent tapestries to Pienza and Siena (particularly to his sisters) and collected even older forms of the art; he owned several vestments in the *opus anglicanum* style, one of which is still in Pienza. There were also Swiss and Flemish *ricamatori* (embroiderers) in Siena who worked largely on Church vestments. Several of them were members of the German Confraternity of Saint Barbara, which commissioned Matteo di Giovanni's

Saint Barbara altarpiece for San Domenico in 1478. Interestingly, the most Gothic of Siennese painters, Giovanni di Paolo, provided designs for vestments in the 1460s.⁷⁶

Discussion of the changes in the artistic situation in the second half of the century, which can be dated to the time of Piccolomini's elevation to the papacy in 1457, follows a few comments about patronage that did not originate in civic or semi-civic institutions, but in the monasteries.

Saint Bernardino's influence on Siennese art was so all-encompassing, and it had such an effect on civic art, that it appears detached from his monastic world. The art commissioned by his order, the Observant Franciscans, cannot be separated from that commissioned by Bernardino himself. At least three artists seem to have worked personally for him: Giovanni di Paolo, who painted a large crucifix for his Church of the Osservanza (now in the Siena Pinacoteca), Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio, and possibly Domenico di Bartolo. Many succumbed to his influence, such as Sassetta, who was much affected by the Franciscan Observant movement, and the first iconographers of Bernardino's own likeness, Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio and Sano di Pietro. Bernardino's promotion of Siennese Trecento paintings of Marian themes fueled a revival of copies of the now-lost fresco of the Ascension of the Virgin, probably by Simone Martini, on the Camollia gate. In his eloquent sermon on the subject Bernardino describes Mary's ascent to heaven, using the imagery of the fresco, and plainly tells his listeners that it was as painted on the Camollia gate. He commissioned a version of the Ascension for the Osservanza (probably the painting by Pietro di Giovanni now in Budapest), but if the existing copies—for example, by Vecchietta and Sano di Pietro—are any indication, many other paintings based on it were executed. Domenico di Bartolo even painted a reduced version, now the property of the Church of the Refugio, which only shows the Virgin's head and her hands in prayer. In 1462 Pius II confirmed the popularity of the cult, issuing a bull granting it official approval.⁷⁷

Domenico di Bartolo created one of the most personal of all Bernardino-inspired images, the *Madonna of Humility*, dated 1433 (Siena Pinacoteca). It was painted at the same time that Bernardino was composing his Latin sermons about the Virgin during a period of repose from his preaching, which he spent at the Osservanza. The painting contains inscriptions that derive from the sermons and prove that the patron was either Bernardino himself or someone very close to him. All the inscriptions relate to the meaning of the name Mary, and complement the cult that Bernardino had established around the adoration of the name of Christ. In a sermon in which he reminded the Siennese that they were citizens

of *Sena vetus civitas Virginis*, he spoke eloquently of his hopes of establishing a cult in the name of Mary. Domenico di Bartolo's painting is the only extant relic of this intention.⁷⁸

The Observant, or reform, movement to which Bernardino belonged did not only affect the Franciscans. The Dominican Observants considered Catherine of Siena their spiritual founder. However, in contrast to Florence, in Siena their influence was slight. Catherine had been much impressed by the eremitic vision of monastic life, particularly as observed at the monastery of Lecceto (a few kilometers outside Siena). In the late fourteenth century it became the center of an Augustinian Observant movement. In 1385 Lecceto was removed from the control of the main house of Sant'Agostino in Siena, and



Figure 19. Cathedral and Piccolomini Palace, Pienza



Figure 20. Vecchietta. *Apostles' Creed* (detail). Reliquary Chapel, Spedale della Scala, Siena

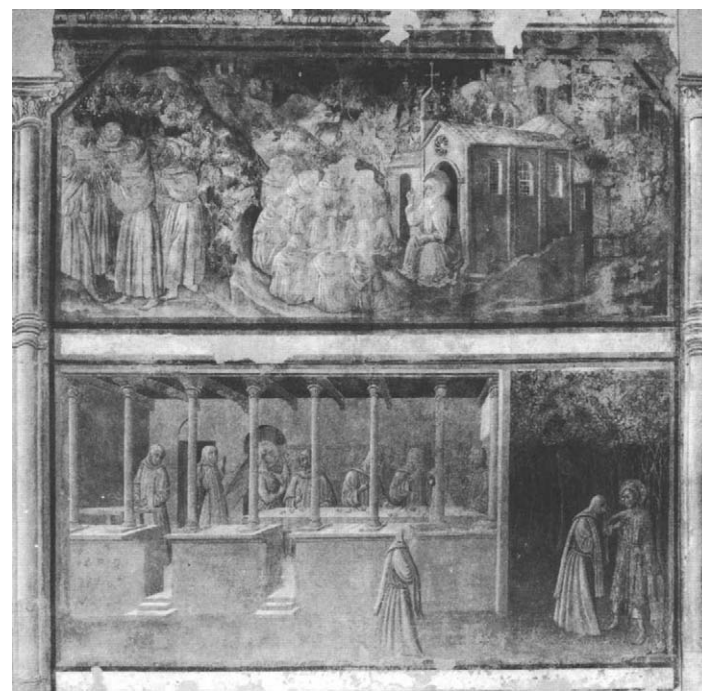


Figure 21. Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio. *Scenes of Monastic Life*. Cloister of Lecceto (Siena)

other hermitages were placed under its leadership. The new position forced the Lecceto community to become more organized. The scattered group of cells grew to include communal monastic buildings, and the monks began to follow a shared daily routine, assembling for chanted prayer. In his architectural treatise Francesco di Giorgio describes sites like Lecceto, adding that “such places are often built in some strange location. And when the locality is more difficult the more it appears to be admired.”⁷⁹ In the 1430s Augustinian theorists like the Milanese Andrea Biglia, a professor in Siena and a frequent guest at Lecceto in the years 1429–32, praised eremitism as practiced there as the best way of giving new direction to the order.⁸⁰ Lecceto caught the attention of Eugenius IV, who in 1446 took advantage of its independence to create a separate Augustinian Observant order, making Lecceto the head of a vast network of hermitages.⁸¹

Saint Catherine had admonished the Lecceto monks to leave the wood and enter the battlefield, thinking perhaps that they were too contented with their isolated existence. They finally had to recognize their new role, and, from 1385 to 1443, commissioned works of art that reflected their more organized way of life and their importance.⁸² A series of choir books was made, including one with miniatures (cat. 30) by Giovanni di Paolo, executed in 1442. He became, in effect, the order's official artist. In the early 1440s he also worked at the nearby dependency of San Leonardo al Lago, and produced at least three altarpieces for Augustinian houses. At the same time, the Lecceto cloister was frescoed by a team of artists with scenes of eremitic monasticism (fig. 21) and events from the Life of Saint Augustine and of Saint Monica. Monica's remains had been transferred from Ostia to Rome in 1431, and Andrea Biglia had written an oration honoring the event that brought much attention to the order and a renewed devotion to Monica (she is depicted in Giovanni di Paolo's altarpiece of 1453 in the Metropolitan Museum). The frescoes show Monica's and Augustine's parting, and the trip that brought her to Ostia. Cuttings of two miniatures by the Master of the Osservanza (cat. 9 a), undoubtedly from a manuscript illuminated for an Augustinian community near Siena, commemorate this event.

The eremitic ideal as expounded at Lecceto appealed to the Sienese character. That—and mysticism—had long been a distinguishing feature of the city's religious life. Siena was home to one other order that had developed along these lines: the Gesuati, founded by Giovanni Colombini in 1355, at the time of the fall of the Nine. In the early fifteenth century, under close papal watch—particularly because of the suspicion that some Gesuati communities (especially in Venice) were infiltrated by heretical *fratelli* (strict followers of the ideal of poverty)—the Gesuati gained official status as an order. Early Christian monasticism and, specifically, the life of the hermit as idealized by Saint Jerome—the penitent, not the scholar—had attracted Colombini and his followers. In fact, the antipathy to learning on the part of many of the Gesuati culminated in 1438 in the appointment of a papal commission to settle the question. A more scholarly committee could not have been selected: Giovanni Tavelli, Bishop of Ferrara and general of the order; Niccolò Albergati, the humanist bishop much enamored of Jerome and owner of Jan van Eyck's *Saint Jerome in His Study* (Albergati died in Siena in 1444 and probably had the painting, later in the Medici collection and now in Detroit, with him); and Ludovico Barbo, one of the founders of the Benedictine reform convent of San Giorgio in Alga in Venice and a long-time abbot at Santa Giustina in Padua. The outcome of this commission was that the Gesuati could be priests and allow priests in the order; thus, a decision in favor of the learned monk won out.

This is the background of the entry of the Sienese Antonio Bettini into the mother convent of San Girolamo in Siena in 1439. He was soon a good friend of Tavelli and one of the leaders of the order. In 1440 he was given the task of establishing a Gesuati community in Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Rome, and although throughout his life he was frequently away from Siena, he maintained close contact with the convent. He probably ordered and certainly had a hand in shaping Sano di Pietro's Gesuati altarpiece, dated 1444 (fig. 22) and, therefore, made in time for the consecration of San Girolamo in 1446. The predella to this altarpiece, in the Louvre, contains scenes from the Life of Jerome, the order's revered saint. In *Tractatus sive allegationes pro ordine Jesuatorum*, Bettini explains the connection with Jerome: "the buildings [of the order] are dedicated to Saint Jerome whose doctrines are imitated and followed."⁸³ The stories openly confront the question of learning. Jerome's own doubts on the matter are illustrated in a depiction of a dream in which he is castigated by Christ for his love of classical literature, and Jerome the penitent hermit, in the desert, is the subject of another scene.⁸⁴ Jerome the cardinal, in his study, is not represented. Sano di Pietro's small *Penitent Jerome* in the Siena Pinacoteca was likely also painted for a Gesuati patron. In another, later altarpiece for the Gesuati (also in the Siena Pinacoteca) Sano shows Jerome the penitent as a Gesuati monk.⁸⁵

Just as Giovanni di Paolo was the principal painter of the Augustinians, Sano occupied the same position for the Gesuati. He undoubtedly received the commission for an altarpiece for the Benedictine nunnery of Santa Bonda (Siena Pinacoteca) for this reason. Colombini had been closely associated with this convent, and his follower, the Blessed Francesco Vincenti, who is represented in the altarpiece, was buried there. In 1444, at the request of the nuns of Santa Bonda, the general of the Gesuati, Giovanni Tavelli, wrote *De perfectione religionis* for them.⁸⁶ The renewal of these contacts with the Gesuati probably led to the commemoration of the convent's associations with Colombini and Vincenti in Sano's altarpiece.

The monastery at Monte Oliveto Maggiore, the seat of the Olivetan branch of the Benedictine order, was presided over by an abbot general who changed periodically.⁸⁷ In the 1450s through the 1470s the abbots were mostly from Northern Italy, and provided yet another source of information for Sienese artists and patrons on cultural developments outside of Siena. In 1456, during his first term as abbot, Francesco Ringhieri of Bologna had commissioned the Milanese monk Antonio da Sesto to write a series of choir books for the monastery. In 1467, the year that Ringhieri again became prior, Liberale da Verona,

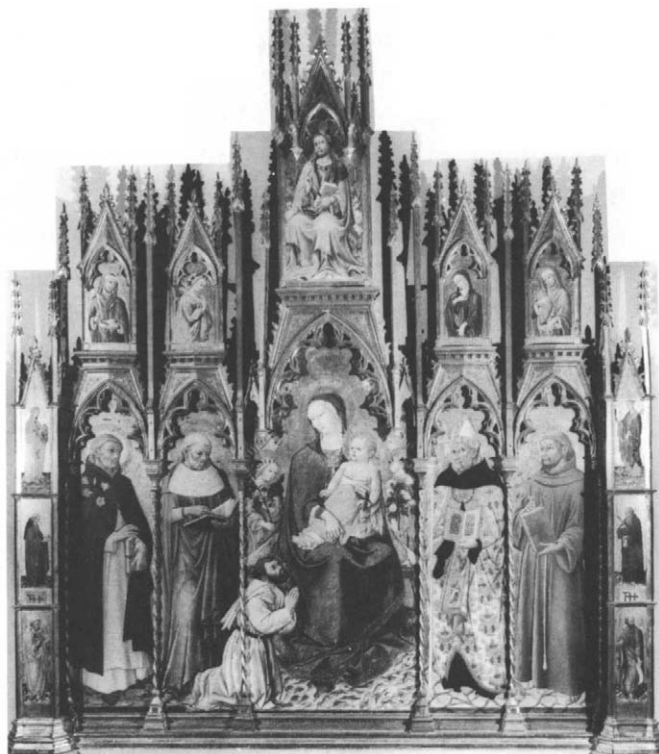


Figure 22. Sano di Pietro. The Gesuati Altarpiece. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

who had previously worked for the Olivetan community of Santa Maria in Organo in Verona, was first paid for the miniatures painted for these choir books.

From 1472 to 1476, Monte Oliveto Maggiore had an important abbot, the Ferrarese Niccolò Roverella; he was the brother of Bartolomeo Roverella, Bishop of Ravenna, and of Lorenzo, Bishop of Ferrara.⁸⁸ In 1479 he was prior of San Giorgio in Ferrara, and most certainly was involved in commissioning Cosimo Tura's altarpiece for the Roverella family chapel in that same church. The altarpiece, which survives in fragmentary form, is usually thought to date to between about 1474 and 1477. During Roverella's priorship at Monte Oliveto, Francesco di Giorgio was working for the monastery almost in the guise of an official artist. His *Nativity* for their convent in Siena is dated 1475, and his *Coronation of the Virgin* for Monte Oliveto itself dates to between 1472 and 1475. Although the latter painting was probably commissioned during the tenure of the prior Leonardo Mezzavacca (the chapel of Saints Sebastian and Catherine was then being restored with

funds from the Neapolitan Giovanni Cianci Valentino), Roverella was abbot during the years of its installation. The reciprocal effects of his presence in Tuscany on artists like Francesco di Giorgio needs elaboration. Roverella is the abbot who most represented a Renaissance culture. It should be remembered that in 1476, while Roverella was abbot, Antonio Rossellino is documented as at work on the tomb of Roverella's brother in San Giorgio in Ferrara.

Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's elevation to the papacy as Pius II in 1457 brought long-lasting changes to Siennese society. Although he rarely stayed in Siena during his seven-year reign, and his relationship to the government was sometimes antagonistic, Pius was able to realign the internal social structure by assuring political rights for the *Gentiluomini*—and especially for his own family—and by advocating the readmission of many who were exiled in 1456. The nomination of his twenty-year-old nephew Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini as cardinal in 1458 gave the city a permanent Piccolomini presence, even if Francesco spent most of his time in Rome. In 1487, after the Nine took over, he was asked to reform the government. The consolidation of the power of the Nine and the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci established a dominant ruling class whose cultural aspirations were often inspired by the example of the aristocratic Piccolomini. During the last part of the century, Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini; Alberto Aringhieri, *operaio* of the cathedral from 1480; and Pandolfo Petrucci, lord of the city until his retirement in 1512, were the leading forces in Siennese artistic life, and the heirs to the legacy of Pope Pius II.

The fascination with the culture of ancient Rome grew with the personal connection of Pius II. Subsequently, the myth of Siena's Roman origins was promoted by Cardinal Francesco and by Pandolfo Petrucci in the 1480s, and is reflected in the revival of classical motifs in the art of Vecchietta, Federighi, and Francesco di Giorgio. In the late fifteenth century, humanists hotly debated the city's antiquity. The early-fourteenth-century Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani had asserted Florence's primacy, and proposed that Siena's foundations were Gallic. This view was repeated in Leonardo Bruni's *Historiae*

florenti populi . . ., begun about 1415, and in Flavio Biondo's *Italia illustrata* of about 1453.⁸⁹ Probably referring to this, Pope Pius in the *Commentarii* attacked Biondo's book for its errors, as did Agostino Patrizi in *De Senarum urbis antiquitate*, making use of old documents and epigrams.⁹⁰ While acknowledging the existence of dubious tales about Siena's founding, Piccolomini, in a summary of the city's origins, maintained that they were Roman.⁹¹ Other Siennese scholars like Agostino Dati, a chancellor of the Republic in the middle of the century, and Bartolomeo Benvoglianti, a Canon of the cathedral and a theologian, whose book entitled *De urbis Senae origine et incremento* was commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini, felt the need to prove these claims.⁹² In 1487 Niccolò Borghese, Pandolfo Petrucci's father-in-law, was appointed to the university to teach "opus humanitatis et moralem philosophiam," and to compose "analia" (or a history of Siena), a lost book of which, *De ortu primæ aedificationis*, indexed in the library of his estate, undoubtedly dealt with the same topic.⁹³ The controversy had a certain resonance outside Siena. In *Oratio de laudibus civitatis Bononiae* the Bolognese humanist Benedetto Morandi complained that Pius II received the Siennese ambassadors before those from Bologna. He goes on to compare the two cities, saying that Bologna should be first because it is more ancient, and he documents the claims by listing its antiquities.⁹⁴

The late-fifteenth-century defense of the city's antiquity, however, did not result in civic art monuments as it had in the early part of the century, when Taddeo di Bartolo's cycle of ancient Roman Heroes celebrated the recent liberation from tyranny. The debate had the quality of a literary exercise, and seems to have largely appealed to the new ruling class and its image of itself, rather than that of the *civitas*.

Perhaps the most important public art project in the last forty years of the century was the completion of the pavement decoration in the cathedral, which consisted of inlaid marble plaques. The new *operaio* Aringhieri issued contracts in 1481 and 1483 for figures of Sibyls in the nave. Besides the Sibyls, the program came to include a representation of Hermes Trismegistus (fig. 23) giving a book to a suppliant that reads "Take up letters and laws, O Egyptians."⁹⁵ Hermes, really a Late Antique invention, is identified in an inscription as a contemporary of Moses. He was mentioned in the writings of Cicero and of the Church Fathers Saint Augustine and Lactantius as the philosopher who, to the Egyptians, was the fount

of wisdom. He was considered to be of great antiquity, so that when a copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was brought to Florence in 1460, Cosimo de' Medici had Marsilio Ficino translate it before embarking on the translation of already prepared Platonic texts. The Siennese pavement is the earliest example of the diffusion of this cult in a public sphere. Ficino—following Lactantius—had cast Hermes Trismegistus in Christian terms. In fact, an inscription in the pavement plaque, taken from the section of the *Corpus* called *Asclepius*, is one that Lactantius used to justify Hermes Trismegistus's value for Christendom, because it mysteriously spoke of a second god visible and sensible and of the son of god, and therefore seemed to anticipate many Christian precepts. In the *Divinae institutiones* Lactantius describes Hermes as surrounded by the Sibyls, as he is in the pavement. It is not known who conceived this program, but even though the presence of Hermes Trismegistus



Figure 23. Giovanni di Stefano. *Hermes Trismegistus* (pavement). Cathedral, Siena

could be justified in Christian terms, it shows a certain shift in values in the cathedral imagery, and it is doubtful how familiar it would have been to the average worshiper.

By the 1480s, as the cathedral pavement demonstrated, Sienese public art, which had always been calculated to appeal to the citizens at large, served as a means of expression for a small sector of the ruling class. The traditional mysticism of Sienese religious life was intellectualized, giving way to Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, and astrology. The writings of Lactantius, the most direct source for the imagery and the inscriptions, were found in the library of Niccolò Borghese, who also owned books by Ficino.⁹⁶ The interests of scholars like Borghese; Bettini, the Gesuati whose Neoplatonic text *Il monte sancto di Dio* was published in Florence in 1477; and the cathedral Canon Bartolomeo Benvoglianti, whose *De luce visibili paradoxon* was published in Rome in 1481 and dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, led them to take up the same arcane themes that frequently mixed mysticism and magic.⁹⁷ Lucio Bellanti, ally and later foe of Pandolfo Petrucci, is another representative of the Sienese intellectual interest in magic and Hermeticism at the end of the century. Bellanti was a famous astrologer who wrote a tract in defense of that science—and against Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*—that he published in Florence in 1498 and dedicated to Caterina Sforza.⁹⁸

In the second half of the fifteenth century private patronage became more important than civic commissions, which no longer necessarily served as the primary model for art. The contract of 1478 awarded to Matteo di Giovanni for an altarpiece for the German artisans' Confraternity of Santa Barbara, to be placed on an altar in San Domenico, states that the painting should be taller than that on the altar of Giacomo Borghese. Thus, a private altarpiece made for a member of a prominent and powerful Sienese family had become the standard to emulate and surpass.⁹⁹

During Pius II's pontificate the Piccolomini initiated the trend toward glorification of the family in Sienese art. The pope wished to create a Piccolomini area of the city on as ambitious a scale as his city of Pienza (see fig. 19), built *ex novo*. A large family palazzo and loggia were planned in the district of San Martino near the Campo. The palazzo, which consists of nine bays—making it almost as large as the Palazzo Pubblico—seems to have been intended to be freestanding, with four façades, one of which would have faced the Campo. The building was not finished until the early sixteenth century, and in its final form had only one main façade facing the street. An old Sienese statute mandating that buildings on the Campo be consistent in style with the existing structures may have thwarted the original plans.¹⁰⁰

During the remainder of the century, Cardinal Francesco established a relentless program of Piccolomini glorification and created another Sienese myth, that of Pius II. Because Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini spent so much time in Rome, it was there that his artistic taste largely developed, not in Siena. He therefore felt less bound by Sienese traditions, and most of his patronage in that city was, in fact, of non-Sienese artists. For the Piccolomini Chapel in the cathedral he called upon Andrea Bregno, a Lombard sculptor active in Rome—he actually executed the altar there—probably because that way the cardinal himself could more closely oversee the project. His interest in Lombard sculptors was not limited to Bregno. In 1494 he wrote to the Brescian humanist Bernardino Gadolo, a monk at San Michele di Murano, asking about Andrea Solari. Gadolo responded with as much information about the sculptor as he could gather from local sources; he even described visits to Giovanni Bellini, to inquire about Solari, and finally to the sculptor himself and to his patrons.¹⁰¹ Piccolomini later asked him to procure a sculpture. The archaeological classicism of sculptors like Solari and Bregno appealed to the cardinal. Such taste became widespread in Siena in Pandolfo Petrucci's time and is reflected in the sculpture of Marrina and in the selection of a non-Sienese painter like Pinturicchio to fresco the library in the cathedral with scenes from the Life of Pius II. Gadolo's detailed correspondence and the thoroughness of his investigation testify to the cardinal's reputation as a patron and to his interest in the arts. This was not just limited to

his own projects. In 1494 the cardinal granted dispensations to visitors to the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino, which had just been finished with frescoes by Francesco di Giorgio and with an altarpiece consisting of paintings by Signorelli (cat. 74) and a statue of Saint Christopher by Francesco di Giorgio. Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini described the chapel as a "specioso opere et singularibus ornamentis."¹⁰²

Francesco's program for the glory of the Piccolomini culminated in the commission to Pinturicchio. Pinturicchio was a logical choice because he had painted "history" frescoes with contemporary subjects in Rome. Francesco may have had in mind the lost cycle of Borgia *imprese* in the Castel Sant'Angelo. Despite its location in a church, the library did not follow ecclesiastical models, such as the monastic library in San Marco in Florence. It was conceived according to humanist ideas about ancient libraries. In *De nobilitate* the Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini had described how the ancients adorned their libraries with art: "For they believed that the images of men who had excelled in the pursuit of glory and wisdom, if placed before their eyes, would help ennoble and stir up the soul."¹⁰³ Likewise, the decorative program of Petrucci's palace seems to have been motivated by a wish to emulate the Piccolomini.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, other Siennese families in the late 1490s and early 1500s commissioned decorative cycles depicting virtuous men and women of antiquity for their palaces. These decorative programs and the inscriptions that accompanied the paintings derived from the *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX* by the enormously popular author in ancient Rome Valerius Maximus (for example, Agostino Patrizi possessed a copy).¹⁰⁵ Francesco di Giorgio's *Scipio* (Bargello, Florence) and the Master of the Griselda Legend's *Claudia Quinta* (National Gallery of Art, Washington) come from a series that seems to have belonged to the Spannocchi, a prominent Siennese banking family related to the Piccolomini.¹⁰⁶ These two ancient personages embody the virtues of self-control and sacrifice. Unlike the great public art programs from earlier in the century, such as Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, Jacopo della Quercia's Fonte Gaia, or the benches of the Loggia della Mercanzia, the message is a private one, representing the ideals and the dreams of a Roman past peculiar to a particular social class, not those of the city as a whole.

The artistic ideals that characterized Siennese art during much of the fifteenth century dissolved under the rule of Pandolfo Petrucci, who could ignore the Trecento heritage that, until then, had been so zealously protected. In 1506 he had its foremost symbol—Duccio's *Maestà*—removed from the high altar of the cathedral and replaced with Vecchietta's ciborium from Santa Maria della Scala. This deprecation of a public monument, which would have been inconceivable a few years before, probably best illustrates the demise of Siennese Quattrocento art.

However, there is a brief postscript: From 1525, when Alessandro Bichi, for a short time lord of the city, was killed by the *Libertini*, to 1530, when Charles V's imperial troops took over the reins of government, Siena again enjoyed some of its old independence and liberty. In 1529 Beccafumi began a fresco series in the Sala del Concistoro of the Palazzo Pubblico that comprised scenes from Roman history and a cycle of the Virtues. As with the cycles of Roman Virtues painted for private patrons, Valerius Maximus was the source of much of the material, but thematically the Beccafumi frescoes fit in with Siennese public art of the previous two centuries. In the dialogue by Francisco de Hollanda, dated 1548, Michelangelo acknowledges that there are excellent paintings in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. He probably was referring to Beccafumi's frescoes because he seems to have been particularly impressed by the latter's representation of Justice. In the rarely printed initial treatise to the dialogue, it is described at length, and Michelangelo had to have been Francisco de Hollanda's source.¹⁰⁷ With this painting the tradition of Siennese public art, begun in the fourteenth century, comes full circle. After a long siege in 1555, and definitively in 1559, Siena and its *contado* lost their independence and Cosimo I of Florence became Lord of the ancient Republic.

1. A complete bibliography cannot be attempted here. The one in Ascheri 1985 is most useful, in addition to which the works by Mario Ascheri, Giacomo Ferrau, Gianfranco Fioravanti, David L. Hicks, A. K. Isaacs, Paolo Nardi, and Katherine Walsh—mentioned in the bibliography to this catalogue and cited in this essay—are recommended. Recently, the following art historians have concentrated on the social background of Siena: Nicholas Adams, on the architectural profession; Alessandro Bagnoli, on wood sculpture; James Beck, on Taccola; Gaudenz Freuler, on the early artistic manifestations of the worship of Saint Catherine; Daniela Gallavotti Cavallero, on the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala; Sabine Hansen, on the Loggia della Mercanzia; Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, on the fresco cycle in Lucignano; Robert L. Mode, on paintings of Saint Bernardino; Nicholas Rubinstein, on Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes; Max Seidel, on the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino; a large team of German scholars, at work on a systematic history and catalogue of all Sienese churches, the first volume of which is published; Henk van Os, on Vecchietta's sacristy frescoes, Sienese altarpieces, and, most recently, Pienza; Frank D. Prager and Giustina Scaglia, on Taccola and engineering; V. Tatrai, on the patronage of the Spannocchi; and Grazia Vailati Schoenburg Waldenburg, on Lecceto.
2. Tommasi 1625. Tommasi himself was a member of the Nine. On the historiography of Siena, see Bowsky 1964, and Cochrane 1981, *passim*.
3. Baxandall 1965, pp. 187–88.
4. Mitchell 1962, p. 285; Prager and Scaglia 1972, p. 16.
5. A general summary of sources and proposals by Benati 1987, pp. 671, 675, under the entry for Maccagnino and the Master of the Boston Desco, is found in Salimei 1986, p. 232, n. 8.
6. Text printed in Weller 1943, pp. 279–80.
7. Filarete 1972, pp. 161, 250.
8. It is used once in a eulogy to himself: "Fons Gaius nostro sanguine plenus erit./Eius marmoribus funebria carmina ponam . . .," and another time in an epigram: "Marrasius moriens vitamque animamque reliquit/Fonte sub hoc; reteggit frigidus ossa lapis." See Marrasii 1976, pp. 124, 198. Patrizi's poem is cited in Smith 1966, pp. 97–98.
9. This summary generally follows the analysis set forth in Fioravanti 1979, and 1987. For a review of Fioravanti's excellent first text, see Nardi 1982.
10. Fioravanti 1979, p. 136.
11. For the letter urging Barnaba not to abandon his studies, see Marrasii 1976, pp. 165–67, and for Piccolomini's letter to Giovanni Tolomei lamenting his wish to retire to the country, see Piccolomini 1909–18, I, pp. 114–16. Patrizi's poem is cited in Smith 1967, II, p. 139.
12. Fioravanti 1979, p. 149.
13. Piccolomini 1571, p. 456.
14. Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto 1984, pp. 123, 151, n. 41, ill. p. 113.
15. Paolo di Middelburg, *sub voce*, *Enciclopedia italiana*, 1949, 26, p. 233.
16. Craveri 1966.
17. Ruysschaert 1968.
18. Seidel 1979.
19. Fioravanti 1979, p. 154.
20. Lisini and Iacometti 1931. The following is a selection. In the so-called chronicle of Paolo di Tommaso Montauri, the Fonte Gaia is recorded "con figure di marmo con altro bello ornamento . . ." (p. 793). Tommaseo Fecini (b. 1441–still active 1479) records Sassetta's *Crucifixion* of 1433 for San Martino (p. 848); Domenico di Bartolo's frescoes in the sacristy of the Duomo, finished in 1439 (p. 852); the beginning of the painting of the Pellegrinaio in the hospital in 1441 (p. 852); the woodwork in the hospital's sacristy, begun in 1445 (p. 856); the endowment of the chapel of San Crescenzo in the Duomo in 1448 (p. 860); and the marble supply for the Loggia della Mercanzia in 1448/49 (p. 860). Since most of these events took place before Fecini's birth or when he was a youth, the list is a good example of what was considered artistically important in later Quattrocento Siena. Sigismondo Tizio's *Historiae Senenses*, written between 1506 and 1528, contains much information on art works, and is the only reference for a number of important monuments. It must be systematically culled for these references. The original manuscript is in the Vatican Library (Chigi G.I.35), and there are two copies dating to 1727 by Galgano Bichi in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence (II.V.140), and the Biblioteca Comunale, Siena (B.III.6–15).
21. Schlosser 1912, pp. 40–43.
22. Schlosser 1912, p. 42.
23. Piccolomini 1909–18, 3, pp. 98–101.
24. I unfortunately cannot trace the comment cited by Ercoli (1980, p. 302) that Pius II equated Simone's greatness with that of Giotto, and it seems to be spurious. In the humanist Uberto Decembrio's unpublished "De re publica libri IV," which dates to the early 1420s, there is the curious reference to a Johanne de Senis. He must actually mean Simone Martini, as the artist is mentioned with Zoto florentius: "Idem di Zoto florentius et Johanne de Senis avorum nostrorum temporibus. . . ." Decembrio also lists the modern painters Iohanne Arbosio (Jean d'Arbois, father of Stefano da Verona), Michelino Papensi (Michelino da Besozzo), and Gentile da Fabriano; see Moench 1986, p. 225, and Mulazzani 1974, p. 226, notes 36, 37.
25. Piccolomini 1909–18, 1, pp. 21–24.
26. Bernardino 1935, p. 458.
27. Bernardino 1880–88, II, pp. 426–27.
28. E. Carli 1976.
29. Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 70–73. Ghiberti only mentions Ambrogio Lorenzetti. The Codice Magliabechiano first identifies Simone Martini's participation and Vasari, that of Pietro Lorenzetti.
30. Leverotti 1984, p. 285. "Et in eius frontispitio et faciata sunt depicte certe historiae beatissime nostre Virginis Marie et sunt actabiliores quam habet mundus."
31. Leverotti 1984, p. 286.
32. Paoletti 1967, p. 254.
33. The figures are from Hicks 1966, and 1986. They are based on a fiscal population of about 13,000 to 14,000 multiplied by a factor of 4.23.
34. Hanson 1965, esp. pp. 10–21.
35. Bacci 1927.
36. Piccolomini 1984, p. 283.
37. Piccolomini 1984, p. 283.
38. Cited in Catoni 1973, p. 159.
39. Rubinstein 1958, pp. 204–5; Fioravanti 1979, p. 125.
40. Banchi 1880.
41. Donato 1985, pp. 146–47.
42. Liberati 1935, and 1936; Piana 1951.
43. Liberati 1935, pp. 153, 157, n. 1.
44. The commissioning of these paintings is the subject of a forthcoming study by Gaudenz Freuler and Michael Mallory.
45. Milanese 1854, II, pp. 243–44, 271–78.
46. Sani 1987, pp. 502–3.
47. Sani 1987, pp. 500–501.
48. Lusini 1939, pp. 16–18. The renovation of the *operaio's* house merited mention in the chronicles; see Lisini and Iacometti 1931, p. 849.

49. Lisini and Iacometti 1931, p. 854, and P. Piccolomini 1904, p. 7. Piccolomini records many illustrious visits to Siena in the fifteenth century.
50. Pecci 1755–60, I, p. 32. See Pope-Hennessy 1982, p. 151, on Aringhieri's background and first commissions.
51. Milanese 1854–56, III, p. 27, II, p. 378.
52. Sani 1987, p. 501.
53. Calamari 1930, pp. 260–68; Liberati 1938; Bentini in Vignola 1988, pp. 148–50.
54. Lusini 1939, pp. 45–46.
55. Lusini 1939, pp. 75–76. The date of Donatello's tomb slab, always given as about 1426, the year of Pecci's death, needs to be reconsidered in this context. Siennese tomb slabs that date to the years immediately after 1426 were not in the least influenced by Donatello, whose effect on Siennese sculpture was only really felt again in the 1450s when he returned to Siena. Vecchietta's effigy of Mariano Sozzini (1460) is the first Siennese funerary monument that seems to take into account the work by Donatello.
56. The relationship of the composition of this altarpiece with a Quercesque relief of Saint George Killing the Dragon, in Cesena, has not been previously noted. See Brunetti 1977, fig. xx.10.
57. Decembrio 1983, p. 90. I would like to thank Giovanni Agosti for this reference. Discussions with him on various aspects of this essay enriched its content.
Decembrio himself may have been behind the proposal; when Eugenius IV was in Siena in 1443, Decembrio was Visconti's ambassador to the Curia. He also maintained a correspondence with the Siennese humanist Ludovico Petroni. Fioravanti 1979, p. 161.
58. Hansen 1987.
59. "Et dictam Comune Florentiae teneatur et debeat omni tempore presentem pacem ipsi Comuni Senarum bene et effectualiter observare." From the declaration of the *Consiglio Generale*, dated April 10, 1404, cited in Catoni 1973, p. 159.
60. Dionisotti 1963, p. 166. "Ma chi s'accorge, se una mattina, / per esser presso, gli troviamo in casa, / e veder tutti andar in extermina."
61. Serdini da Siena 1965, p. 236. The verse is frequently quoted in writings about Siena.
62. Seidel 1979, esp. pp. 40–44.
63. "De' fare li ornamenti, lanterna, et fornimenti conformi a l'ordine de lo hediftio et resto de la chiesa." Milanese 1854–56, II, p. 433. See also Scaglia 1982.
64. Banchi 1877, pp. 233–34.
65. Bernardino 1880–88, III, p. 322.
66. Bernardino 1880–88, III, p. 323.
67. Dati 1503, p. lxxi.
68. Strehlke 1985, p. 172, n. 1.
69. Salimei 1986, p. 231.
70. Strehlke 1985, p. 172.
71. Benati 1982, pp. 22–23, n. 24, and 1987, p. 675.
72. Varese 1970.
73. Milanese 1854, II, pp. 190–91, 210–14.
74. Van Os (1974, pp. 75–78) proposed a much earlier precedent, the Joinville Creed, but the tapestries would seem to provide a more immediate source. On Creed tapestries, see Wood 1914.
75. Baxandall 1963, p. 316.
76. Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 243–46, 429, fig. 236. One of Giovanni di Paolo's designs for an embroidery of the Annunciation for a church vestment from Santa Maria della Scala survives in an altar frontal (*paliotto*), now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, made up of pieces from several textiles designed at different dates and by different artists.
77. Bulletti 1935; Laurent 1939.
78. Strehlke 1984.
79. Martini 1967, I, p. 239.
80. "Biglia" 1968; Arbesmann 1965, esp. pp. 164, 217, 286.
81. Walsh 1972, 1979, and 1980.
82. Vailati Schoenburg Waldenburg, 1981, 1983.
83. Cited in Guarnieri 1977, col. 1126.
84. See the illuminating passages on the cult of Jerome in Rice 1985, *passim*.
85. This is the subject of a forthcoming study by Gaudenz Freuler and Michael Mallory.
86. Dufner 1975, pp. 131–36.
87. Scarpini 1952.
88. Scarpini 1952, pp. 100–101.
89. Hicks 1986, p. 9, n. 1. On this topic in general, see Cristofani in Siena 1979, pp. 117–24, and *passim*.
90. Piccolomini 1984, pp. 257–59; Avesani 1964, pp. 26–27, notes 115, 117.
91. Piccolomini 1984, p. 283.
92. On Benvoglianti, see Craveri 1966.
93. "Borghese" 1970, p. 606.
94. De Maria 1988, pp. 36–37.
95. On Hermes Trismegistus in the Renaissance, see Yates 1964, and esp. pp. 42–43 for the Siennese representation.
96. On this library, see Mazzi 1895, Zdekauer 1898, and Humphreys 1978, p. 37.
97. On Bettini, see Prunai 1967; on Benvoglianti, see Craveri 1966.
98. Vasoli 1965.
99. The patronage of Matteo di Giovanni's altarpiece is the subject of a forthcoming study by Max Seidel.
100. R. Rubinstein 1957, I, pp. 67–68.
101. Agosti 1986, p. 58.
102. Seidel 1979, p. 99, n. 55.
103. Joost-Gaugier 1985, p. 58.
104. See Agosti 1982.
105. Avesani 1964, pp. 36, 56.
106. Tàtrai 1979.
107. Francisco de Hollanda 1984, II, p. 40, and I, p. 79. I wish to thank Giovanni Agosti for bringing this reference to my attention.

THE CATALOGUE

SASSETTA

(Stefano di Giovanni)

active by 1423; died 1450

Sassetta (the name occurs in no contemporary documents and seems to have originated only in the eighteenth century) was unquestionably the most original Siennese painter of the first half of the fifteenth century. His father, Giovanni di Consalvo, was from Cortona, but Sassetta was in all probability trained in the workshop of Benedetto di Bindo in Siena, where his name was inscribed in the guild of painters prior to 1428. He was not a prolific artist; his highly refined technique, with its elaborately tooled surfaces, and the complicated foreshortenings of his architectural settings, created unique demands. The range of tasks he undertook was typical: altarpieces, frescoes, designs for the inlaid pavement of the cathedral (1426), a working drawing for the Siena baptismal font (1427), cartoons for a stained-glass window (1440), the painting of banners (1442), and, possibly, illuminations (see cat. 5). Much of his work has been lost or destroyed. Nonetheless, the outlines of Sassetta's career emerge clearly enough from the surviving parts of several of his most important commissions.

First in date was an altarpiece painted for the guild of wool merchants, apparently between 1423 and 1426, of which six scenes from the predella are included here (cat. 1 a–f). This altarpiece is one of the landmarks of Tuscan painting. As remarked in the relevant catalogue entries, its most novel features—the audacious projected space of the interior settings and the landscapes bathed in a convincing light and atmosphere—are the result of Sassetta's intensive study of the work of his great forebears, Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti in particular. However, his style was not derivative, for what interested him were the animating principles of earlier Siennese paintings, not compositional models.

The same intellectual curiosity informs his most radical experiment in realistic painting, the altarpiece of the Madonna of the Snow painted between 1430 and 1432 for Siena Cathedral (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence). The impetus behind this innovative work was provided by an undocumented trip to Florence and the study of the frescoes by Masaccio and Masolino in the Brancacci Chapel. However, like other Siennese artists, in Florence Sassetta was equally attracted by the ornate surfaces and naturalistic landscapes of Gentile da Fabriano's masterpiece, *The Adoration of the Magi* (Uffizi, Florence), to which he later paid direct homage (cat. 2).

The example of Gentile, together with those of Simone Martini and, possibly, of Franco-Flemish illuminations, dominates the last decade and a half of Sassetta's career. His early achievements were not abandoned, but his concern for a geometric order enlivened with naturalistic effects was subsumed in a style emphasizing delicacy and refinement. The masterpiece of this neo-Gothic phase is the polyptych painted between 1437 and 1444 for the church of San Francesco in Borgo Sansepolcro (the main panels are now divided between the National Gallery, London; the Louvre, Paris; the Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence; and the Musée Condé, Chantilly). This was one of the most expensive and carefully conceived and executed altarpieces of the entire fifteenth century and in aesthetic terms it is Sassetta's masterpiece. Yet, although its image of Saint Francis in glory seems, exceptionally, to have influenced Piero della Francesca's early *Madonna of Mercy* (Museo Civico, Borgo Sansepolcro), the altarpiece is less audaciously innovative than his earlier work, and it marks Sassetta's growing isolation from the mainstream of Renaissance art. In his last two works, an *Assumption of the Virgin*

(formerly in Berlin; destroyed) and the frescoed decoration of the Porta Romana, on which he was at work when he fell ill and died, foreshortenings and *di sotto in sù* views are primarily used to a decorative end.

Sassetta's fame did not long outlast him, and he became an all-but-forgotten figure in succeeding centuries. His rehabilitation at the hands of Langton Douglas and Bernard Berenson dates from the early years of this century, and it is only in the last five decades that his achievement has emerged distinctly from that of his pupils and followers—among whom the most prominent is the so-called Master of the Osservanza.

THE ARTE DELLA LANA ALTARPIECE (catalogue 1 a–f)

Sassetta's first major commission was a triptych for the prestigious guild of wool merchants, the Arte della Lana. To judge from the surviving scenes of the predella, all of which are included here, it must have been among his finest as well as his most innovative works, and it opens a new chapter in the history of Sienese painting. There is no surviving contract or record of payment to Sassetta, but the following sequence of events can be established on the basis of a rereading of documents first referred to by de Nicola (1913) and subsequently reviewed by Pope-Hennessy (1939, pp. 6–10, 37–41, notes 7–22), Scapecchi (1979), and, most recently, by Moran (1980).

Beginning in July 1423, the Arte della Lana imposed a tax on cloth to finance the painting of an altarpiece for the annual celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi that the guild had sponsored in the Church of the Carmine from 1370 (Carapelli 1718, f. 30 v; the feast had, however, been celebrated by the Carmelites earlier: see Borghesi and Banchi 1898, pp. 28–30). The tax was to remain in effect for two years, but was later extended through 1426. The wooden structure had already been funded by a prominent citizen, "and only the painting is lacking" (*Arti* 64, f. 22 v). Sassetta was presumably not engaged until this point or shortly thereafter. It has been argued that work was completed by the following June (Scapecchi 1979, pp. 17–21), but this cannot be verified and is, in fact, unlikely: Even allowing for the fact that the panels had been prepared, Sassetta's refined technique was time-consuming, and the task was a large one. The site of the chapel is not mentioned, but it was almost certainly in the Carmine itself (Moran 1980, pp. 34–36). Ties between the Arte della Lana and the Carmine were extremely close, the monks playing a supervisory role in the election of guild officials (*Arti* 62, f. 3 r, v). In 1431, the Arte della Lana took action on a new chapel in the Carmine ("super materia nove e maioris cappelle fiende in ecclesia Ste. Marie de Monte Carmello") and further

prohibited the transfer of their altarpiece ("tabula artis": presumably the one painted by Sassetta) without the consent of the guild council (*Arti* 64, f. xxvii r: the passage is interpreted by Moran 1980, p. 36, as referring to the high altar).

Celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi was transferred from the Carmine to the cathedral by Pope Nicholas V in 1448 (Fecini, in Muratori XV, vi, p. 859; Carapelli 1718, f. 30 v), and it was perhaps partly in consideration of this action that the guild decided in 1460 to build a chapel adjacent to the church of San Pellegrino in what is now the Piazza dell'Indipendenza, where its headquarters were located. The Carmelites continued, however, to celebrate Corpus Christi in the new chapel into the eighteenth century (Bossio 1575, ff. 80 v–81 r; Ben-voglienti, ff. 37 v–38 r). The relocation was part of an extensive remodeling of the square financed in large part by the Arte della Lana. In May 1463, an altarpiece (referred to simply as "il Quadro") was solemnly installed. Whether this was Sassetta's altarpiece is not absolutely clear (Moran 1980, p. 34). However, there can be no doubt that his altarpiece was eventually placed in the chapel, since it is described in unambiguous terms by Carapelli (1718, f. 30 v) and again later in the eighteenth century by Abate Girolamo Carli (ff. 81–82; the relevant passages are transcribed by Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 6–7, 38, n. 8). It is Carli's detailed account that enables a partial reconstruction of the altarpiece, which may have been dismantled as early as 1777 when the chapel was razed.

The center panel of the triptych showed a monstrosity suspended by angels playing musical instruments above a strip of landscape with "two castles with battlements, and Gothic fortifications with many fine towers and two domes." An inscription on the background in semi-Gothic letters read: "Hinc opus omne. Patres. Stefanus construxit ad aras Senensis Iohannis. Agens citra lapsus adultos." On the lateral panels figures of Saints Anthony Abbot

and Thomas Aquinas were depicted. Above these were pinnacles with the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate, while over the center panel was the Coronation of the Virgin. Between the three pinnacles ("frammezzo") were two small, half-length figures of saints. Pilasters, each decorated with two small, full-length figures of saints, framed the altarpiece. The predella consisted of seven scenes with, left to right, two episodes from the life of Saint Thomas Aquinas "concerning the sacrament," a scene showing a figure "who expires while taking Communion," the Last Supper, and three scenes of Saint Anthony (in point of fact, only two were representations of Saint Anthony; the third relates to another monk: see cat. 1 e).

Since all trace of the altarpiece was lost after its dispersal, Carli's description is the sole means of identifying surviving parts. The largest group of panels that can, with confidence, be associated with the altarpiece is in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (provenance unknown). These comprise, in addition to the *Institution of the Eucharist* and *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* from the predella (cat. 1 d, f), a half-length figure of Elijah (fig. 1) and of Elisha in Carmelite habits (obviously the small, half-length saints mentioned by Carli as occupying a position between the pinnacles); four standing figures of the patron saints of Siena (the pairs of saints from the pilasters; fig. 2); and a related group of four smaller, standing Church Fathers (fig. 3: not described by Carli, but indisputably from the same complex; they perhaps formed a narrower set of pilasters separating the center and lateral panels of the triptych, on the model of Taddeo di Bartolo's altarpiece in the cathedral of Montepulciano). Four other scenes from the predella, in various collections, can also be confidently identified (cat. 1 a–c, 1 e). Beyond these, however, the matter becomes more hypothetical.

A standing figure of Saint Anthony Abbot, in the collection of the Monte dei Paschi, Siena, together with badly damaged pinnacles showing Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate, in the Pinacoteca in Massa Marittima and in the Yale University Art Gallery, respectively, have been identified with the main panels (Zeri 1956). However, because the upper edge of the Saint Anthony panel measures only 29.5 cm., while its putative pinnacle at Yale is 43.5 cm. wide (50 cm. including the outer frame), it is clear that they are from different altarpieces. In all likelihood, the Yale and Massa Marittima pinnacles crowned Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence), painted between 1430 and 1432 for the cathedral of Siena (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 27). The lateral divisions of that altarpiece measure 43.3 and 43 cm. excluding the frame, and 60 cm. including the framing elements. This would still leave the possibility that the *Saint Anthony* formed part of the Arte della Lana altarpiece, but since the saint wears a differently colored habit

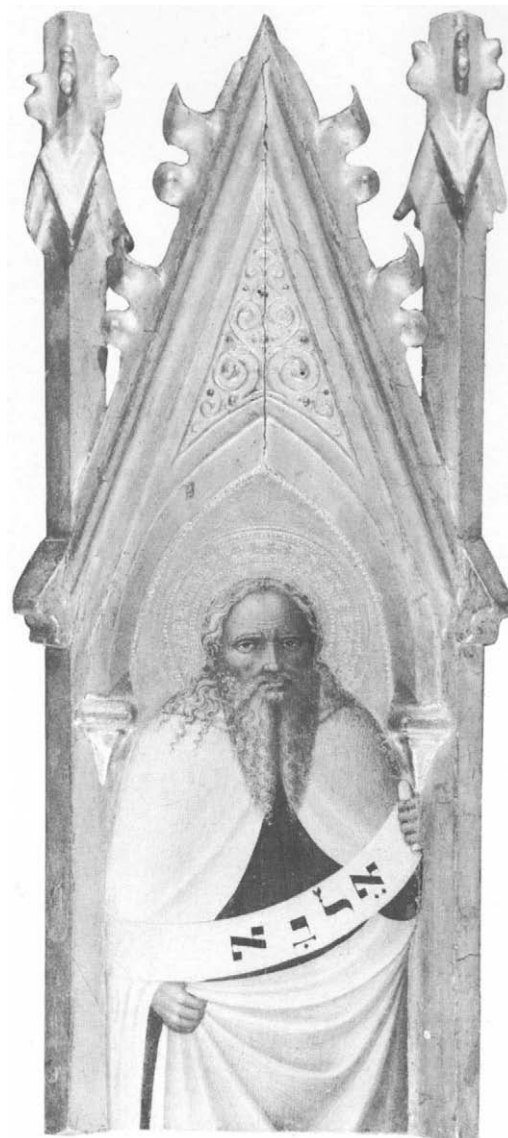


Figure 1. Sassetta. *The Prophet Elijah*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

from that worn by his counterpart in the predella panel (the mantle is brownish rather than gray), the association is unlikely (see Ressort 1983, p. 81, who relates the *Saint Anthony* to a *Saint Nicholas* of about the same dimensions in the Louvre). Additionally, two well-known fragments of landscapes in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (fig. 4, 5)—generally attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti, but surely by Sassetta—have been associated, plausibly but inconclusively, with the center panel of the altarpiece (Zeri 1973, pp. 28–33; Christiansen 1982, pp. 76–77, n. 53: reexamination of the panels, which have a vertical grain, confirms the technical information reported there. Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 26–27, have unconvincingly attributed the landscapes to the Master of the Osservanza).



Figure 2. Sassetta. *Four Patron Saints: Victor, Ansano, Savino, and Crescenzo*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

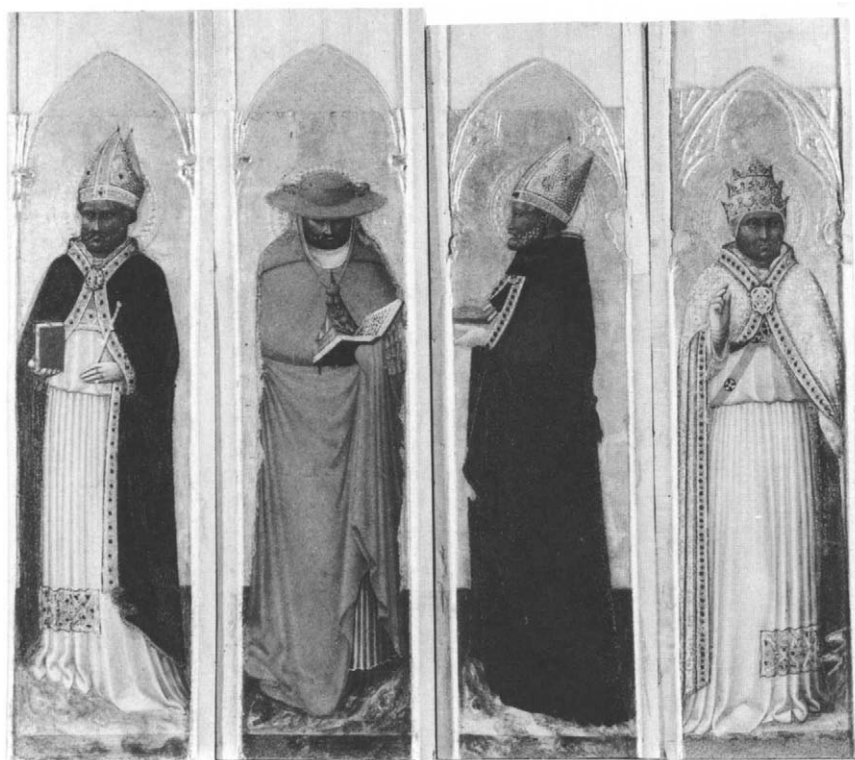


Figure 3. Sassetta. *Four Church Fathers: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Although the precise appearance of the altarpiece remains in many respects conjectural—for example, did the two half-length figures of Elijah and Elisha crown the inner set of pilasters (de Nicola 1913, p. 213), or did they sit atop a tripartite center panel?—a few observations may be made about the predella. The paint surface on each panel has a raised, lipped edge on all sides, indicating that each scene was surrounded by a separate molding. Five of the surviving scenes have approximately equal dimensions, while one—the *Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (cat. 1 a)—is about 10 cm. narrower. It stands to reason that this scene and its lost counterpart showing an episode from the Life of Saint Anthony were positioned under the outer pilasters. Assuming that the remaining scenes were distributed one under each standing saint and three under the center panel of the triptych, the maximum widths of the main panels can be estimated as roughly 50 cm. for the lateral panels and 150 cm. for the center panel.

Prior to commissioning the altarpiece from Sassetta, each year for Corpus Christi the Arte della Lana had been forced to borrow a painting to decorate the altar of the Carmelite chapel (*Arti* 64, f. 22 v), and it is clear that the principal objective of the guild was to commemorate the feast it sponsored. However, in the normal course of events, the Carmelite monks, in whose church the chapel was located and who officiated at the feast, would have regulated if not conceived the basic theme of the altarpiece. Thus, not only did the center panel show the exaltation of the Eucharist, but the three scenes in the predella below depicted the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and two contemporary events related to the Eucharist in which the guild and/or Carmelite monks had been involved (cat. 1 c, e). It is worth noting that the doctrine of transubstantiation (the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ), central to Eucharistic devotions, had been attacked by John Wycliffe in the *De Eucharistia* of 1379. (Wycliffe promoted the doctrine of consubstantiation.) His ideas were condemned at the Blackfriars Council in 1382—at which Carmelites played an active role—but through the Bohemian reformer John Hus they gained new prominence in the early fifteenth century and were condemned again in 1415 at the Council of Constance, at which time Hus was burned at the stake as a heretic. These events unquestionably form the background out of which the program of the altarpiece was devised, and a convincing interpretation of Sassetta's enigmatic inscription on the center panel, recorded by Abate Carli, suggests an intentional reference to them and to the proceedings of the Church Council held in Siena in 1423–24 (Scapecchi 1979; but see, in response, Mencaraglia 1982, pp. 46–52).

The orthodoxy of the Church's teaching about the Eucharist is attested in the altarpiece by the presence of

the four Church Fathers—Jerome, Gregory the Great, Ambrose, and Augustine—on the pilasters flanking the center panel, while Thomas Aquinas, who gave the classic formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation and who was commissioned by Pope Urban IV to write the offices for the feast, occupied the position of honor. Through the inclusion of Siena's four patron saints and the two legendary founders of the Carmelite order, Elijah and Elisha, the city and the monastic community also bear witness to the doctrine. Saint Anthony was traditionally accorded the role of the founder of monasticism, but he had also opposed the Arian heresy, which denied the true divinity of Christ. The subjects of the pinnacles might seem peculiar in this context, but they are scarcely surprising given the devotion of the Carmelites to the Virgin.

Much has been written about the style of the surviving parts of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece and the light they throw on Sassetta's apprenticeship, most probably to Benedetto di Bindo (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 17). However, of far greater importance than the possible identity of Sassetta's teacher is the recognition that his achievement in the predella scenes is based on a critical reappraisal of the work of the great founders of Sienese painting of the preceding century—in particular, that of Pietro Lorenzetti. Sassetta's altarpiece was created for the very church for whose high altar Pietro had provided an altarpiece in 1329, and the ambitious spatial structure of Sassetta's interiors, the acute sensitivity to setting and details observed from life, and the exquisite feeling for atmosphere in his precocious landscapes depend on a careful study of the predella of Pietro's *Carmin* altarpiece. In reasserting the motivating principles of Sienese painting, Sassetta closely paralleled contemporary events in Florence, where a renewed study of the examples of Giotto and of his early followers was a prelude to the revolutionary style of Masaccio. However, the notion that Sassetta knew the work of Masaccio, Masolino, and possibly Fra Angelico at this early date (Brandi 1949, pp. 38–44; Carli 1957, pp. 17–18; Zeri 1956, p. 39, and 1973, pp. 22–28) has no documentary basis and is probably incorrect. On the other hand, Gentile da Fabriano was in Siena for three months in 1425 and again the following year to paint a polyptych for the exterior of the notaries' palace, and his work may well have encouraged Sassetta to create a style blending naturalism with technical refinement as well as to explore the poetic properties of nature (Christiansen 1982, pp. 50–53).

KC

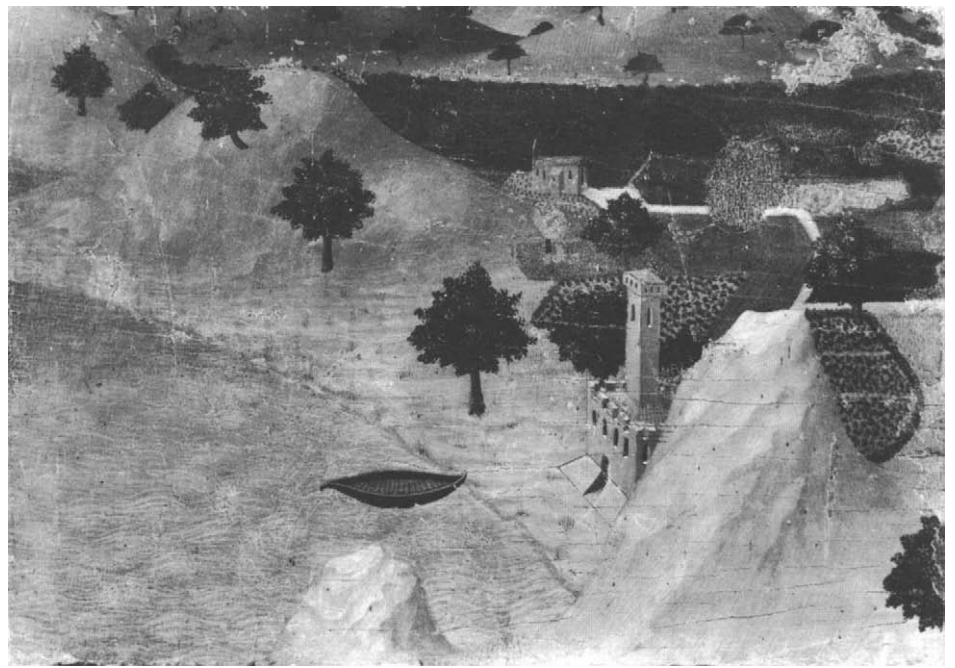


Figure 4. Sassetta. *Landscape*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

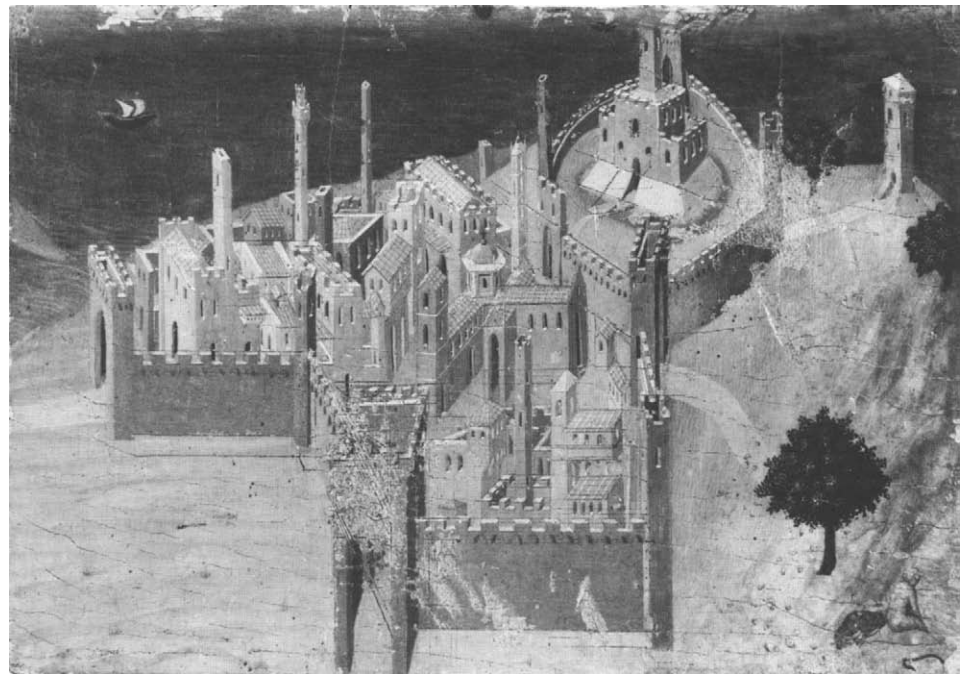


Figure 5. Sassetta. *Landscape*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena



1 a. The Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas

Vatican Museums, Vatican City

Tempera and gold on wood. 25 × 28.8 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned to 1.2 cm. and cradled. There is a lipped edge on all sides. The major damage is the loss of the silver leaf and its glazes used to create the effect of stained-glass windows, as found on the companion scene (cat. 1 b).

Saint Thomas, holding an open book, kneels before a crucifix toward which he gazes intently. Behind, in a narrow room, is a desk with writing implements, while at the left a door opens onto a courtyard. The scene is usually identified with an incident said to have taken place in the monastery of San Domenico in Naples in 1273 (AA.SS. Martii, i, p. 669, no. 35). Saint Thomas was observed leaving his study before Matins to go to the chapel of Saint Nicholas, where he knelt before a crucifix. While absorbed in prayer, he levitated “almost two cubits” off the ground and was addressed by a voice from the crucifix saying: “You have written well of me Thomas, what reward would you like?” (“Thoma Bene scripsisti de me, quam recepies a me pro tuo labore mercedem?”). It was after this event that the great theologian composed the third part of the *Summa Theologica* in which his discussion of the Eucharist is found. A related and in some ways even more apposite event is also recounted by Guglielmo da Tocco (AA.SS. Martii, i, p. 674, no. 53): Saint Thomas approached an altar and, placing before a crucifix what he had written about the nature of the Eucharist, he raised his hands and prayed for a sign that the book’s contents were true. Christ appeared and, standing over the book, replied, “You have written well of my sacramental Body . . .” (“Bene de hoc mei Corporis Sacramento scripsisti . . .”), after which the saint levitated one cubit in the air. Whether Sassetta intended a conflation of the two stories is not certain, but there can be little doubt that Abate Carli was correct when, describing the predella of the altarpiece in the eighteenth century, he interpreted this and the companion scene of Saint Thomas as “concerning the sacrament.” Not only is a cloth, reminiscent of the humeral veil or pall used at Mass, draped above the cross, but the image of the bleeding Christ has the appearance of a real rather than a carved figure, as though he were literally transubstantiated before the saint’s eyes.

This is one of the most compelling and intimate portrayals of monastic life in fifteenth-century painting, surpassed, perhaps, only by its companion scene of *Saint Thomas in Prayer* (cat. 1 b). The architecture—audacious in its complexity and depth, yet articulated with great consistency, and employing a vocabulary that can only be termed post-Gothic—serves not simply to symbolize the chapel in which the miracle takes place, but to sug-

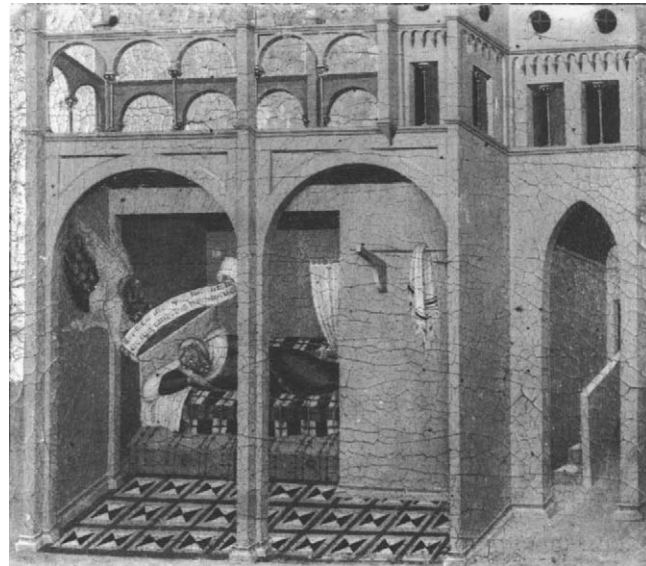


Figure 1. Pietro Lorenzetti. *The Dream of Sobach*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

gest the activities and ambience of Saint Thomas’s life during his last years in Naples. The perspective structure is empirical and resists mathematical analysis, but no other Tuscan painter at this date had created as elaborate an architectural space. It is, therefore, of some interest that a precise parallel for the tripartite division of the picture surface by two arches just behind the picture plane and by an arched door, set well back, which gives access to an inner courtyard, occurs, in reverse, in a predella panel from Pietro Lorenzetti’s Carmine altarpiece, the *Dream of Sobach* (fig. 1). Yet, any comparison between these two scenes underscores the degree to which Sassetta has rationalized the looser, more approximative spatial structure of Lorenzetti’s representation. Ruled incisions—common in the work of other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century artists as well, but seldom as detailed as here—were a primary aid, and they enabled Sassetta to eventually achieve something resembling one-point perspective, although without the advantages of the system codified by Alberti in 1435. One should not rule out the importance of Benedetto di Bindo’s frescoes in the sacristy of the cathedral as a catalyst in Sassetta’s lifelong obsession with space and geometry in his work, which at times curiously recalls that of Uccello (Zeri 1973, pp. 25–28).

The history of the panel cannot be traced prior to this century (Mancinelli 1982, p. 138).

KC





1 b. Saint Thomas Aquinas in Prayer

Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Tempera and gold on wood. 24 × 39 cm. The panel, which is 2.4 cm. thick and has not been thinned, has a horizontal grain. There are traces of the original, lipped edge on all sides.

The picture, purchased in Siena by J. A. Ramboux about 1838–40 (Coor 1959, p. 78), was identified by de Nicola (1913, p. 213) as part of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece. Saint Thomas is seen kneeling in prayer before an altar adorned with a polyptych showing the Madonna and Child at the center with saints—among whom can be recognized Paul, Peter, and a Dominican—in the lateral panels. Above the Gothic altarpiece, in a golden glory, is Christ surrounded by saints and angels (the figures are almost indecipherable, but Jerome, wearing his cardinal's hat, and possibly Augustine or Ambrose can be made out

to the left of Christ). From Christ proceeds a small dove of the Holy Ghost. At the right is the interior of a monastic library, the shelves set with books, while through an open door of the church a courtyard with a well and garden is visible.

The subject of this magical picture does not conform precisely to any literary source (Kaftal 1952, col. 981, no. 3). However, in his biography of the saint, Guglielmo da Tocco twice describes how Thomas had recourse to prayer for inspiration and direction, particularly during his sojourn in Naples when he was at work on those passages of the *Summa Theologica* relating to the Eucharist (AA.SS. Martii, i, pp. 667, no. 30, 668, no. 31). It is worth noting that the white altar cloth is decorated with the same red cross motif as the veil in the *Vision of Saint Thomas* (cat. 1 a): white, or white with red, is the traditional liturgical color for Corpus Christi (Hope and Atchley 1918, pp. 149–50, 223, 229). It is possible that Sassetta

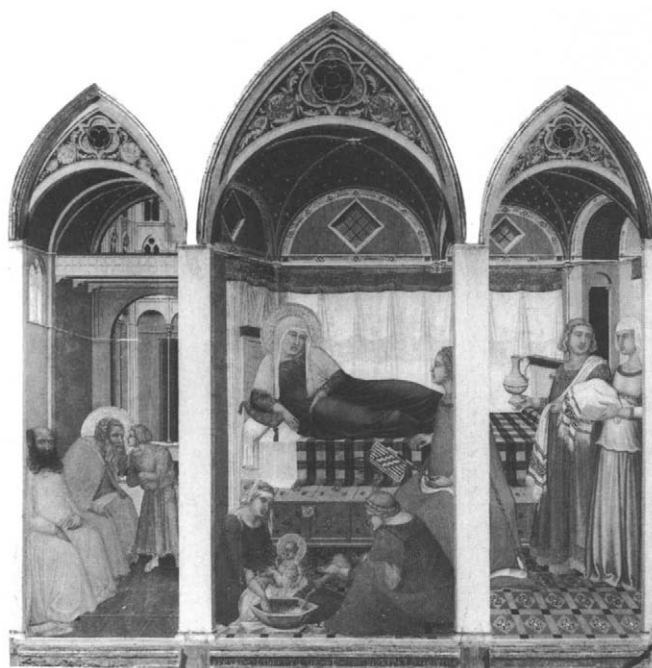


Figure 1. Pietro Lorenzetti. *The Birth of the Virgin*. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena

has intended a reference to the miracle at which Christ appeared to Thomas, standing over a book placed before a crucifix, and approved of his writings about the Eucharist (AA.SS. Martii, i, p. 674, no. 53; see cat. 1 a). A parallel for the substitution of an altarpiece for the crucifix is provided by a panel by the Modenese Bartolomeo degli Erri, in the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco. More generally, the scene may allude to the primacy of prayer and divine inspiration in Saint Thomas's work, and would illustrate the report of his biographer that the saint's "knowledge . . . was acquired not by human genius, but through the merit of prayer. For whenever he wished to study, debate, read, write, or dictate, he first secretly prayed" (AA.SS. Martii, i, p. 668, no. 31).

As in the *Vision of Saint Thomas*, the tripartite division of the surface, with Saint Thomas framed by the central bay, is countered by the angled recession of the architecture: in one case to the left, and in the other to the right. The origin of this ingenious scheme, which Sassetta later abandoned, is to be found in the work of the Lorenzetti—not only in the predella of Pietro's Carmine altarpiece (the scene of *Honorius IV Conferring the White Habit*), but in his altarpiece of the Birth of the Virgin (fig. 1), of 1342, for Siena Cathedral (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena). The latter also provides a parallel for the plunging view through an open door to a courtyard beyond—a motif taken up by both the Master of the Osservanza in his altarpiece of the Birth of the Virgin in Asciano, and by Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio

(cat. 8 a). However, no earlier artist had dared to devote one third of a religious scene to an architectural view that can be read independent of the principal subject. It is in this tour de force of architectural painting that one senses acutely Sassetta's alignment with the most progressive ideas in Tuscan painting, although he was never to adopt the mathematical premise of Florentine art.

KC

1 c. A Miracle of the Sacrament

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, Durham, England

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.1 × 38.2 cm.; painted surface 24 × 38 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. There is a lipped edge on all sides.

The picture, sold at Christie's, London, in 1840 (July 25, no. 2) as by Fra Angelico, was initially attributed to Sano di Pietro by Berenson (1897, p. 175), and identified by de Nicola (1913, p. 213) with Abate Carli's description of the Arte della Lana altarpiece. Carli describes the scene as showing "male and female heads even more beautiful than the preceding [scenes], with a figure exorcised (*ossesso liberato*: these words are canceled in the manuscript) who expires while taking Communion, and a demon carries his soul away" (ff. 81–82). Carli's confusion in explaining the scene is understandable, for the event portrayed has no known literary source and includes no saint. The story was almost certainly taken from a recent occurrence in the Carmine or another Carmelite foundation, and this accounts for the extraordinary quality of actuality given it by Sassetta.

The wooden-roofed church, a common type of ecclesiastical structure of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century in Siena (including the Carmine), is shown longitudinally, so that three nave chapels are viewed frontally while the main chapel and transept are seen in sharp foreshortening. The onlookers are neatly segregated into a group of elegantly dressed men, who stand discussing the miracle; more modestly attired women, kneeling devoutly; and Carmelite monks, who react to the miracle with gestures of astonishment. The officiating priest expresses surprise and consternation at a young monk who has collapsed into the arms of a Carmelite brother as the Eucharist is offered to him on a paten. His soul is snatched by a devil. It has been suggested that the event has some connection to a German Carmelite, Theodosius ab Aquis, who made a pilgrimage to Rome in the third quarter of the fourteenth century and performed a miracle in Siena involving the sacrament



(de Nicola 1913, p. 225). However, as Pope-Hennessy (1939, p. 12) observed, the significance of the miracle as painted by Sassetta lies not in the identity of the priest, but in the Eucharist itself, which is shown transubstantiated into a bleeding Host when offered to a sinful or unbelieving communicant. In this the miracle echoes the more famous occurrence of the bleeding Host at Bolsena, for which the feast of Corpus Christi was instituted, and it constitutes one of a number of popular legends relating to the Eucharist. Uccello's treatment of a story of the profaned Host, in the predella of an altarpiece painted for the Confraternità di Corpus Domini in Urbino, provides perhaps the most pertinent analogy.

Quite apart from the interest of the subject of this picture and its relationship to the general theme of the altarpiece are the consummate narrative and representa-

tional skills employed by the artist. The picture bears comparison with two other works. One is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Consecration of Saint Nicholas* (fig. 1; Uffizi, Florence), in which, to an unprecedented degree, the sacred event has been conceived in terms of everyday life, thereby conferring an incomparable vivacity and credibility on the story illustrated. The other is Gentile da Fabriano's predella panel of *Pilgrims at the Tomb of Saint Nicholas* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), part of an altarpiece completed in 1425 for the church of San Niccolò in Florence, in which the same genre-like attitude toward narration is applied. In one respect, the representational technique employed by Ambrogio and, to a lesser degree, by Gentile was more advanced than Sassetta's, for, whereas the principal orthogonals in the pictures of the first two recede to a central vanishing axis,



Figure 1. Ambrogio Lorenzetti. *The Consecration of Saint Nicholas*. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

in Sassetta's no such regularity pertains. (This in itself would eliminate the probability of Sassetta having made an early trip to Florence, since he would hardly have neglected to learn at least the rudiments of the new perspective practice.) Yet, so acute were Sassetta's powers of observation—evident in the minute description of the carpentry of the altarpieces (of a type familiar from the Master of the Osservanza's eponymous work) and in the gradated light on the inner surfaces of the arched recesses of the nave and of the wooden rafters—that his scene is no less convincing, although more insistent on formal clarity and tidy, geometric shapes. There is the possibility that in this microcosmic re-creation of an ecclesiastical ambient Sassetta was indebted to Gentile, who had arrived in Siena in June 1425 (Christiansen 1982, p. 53).

KC

1 d. The Institution of the Eucharist

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Tempera and gold on wood. 24 × 38 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, seems not to have been thinned. A lipped edge is visible on all sides. For a report on the cleaning, see Scapecchi 1979, p. 119.

The picture was catalogued in 1842 as by an unknown artist. It was recognized as a work by Sassetta in 1852, and in 1872 was identified as part of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (see Brandi 1933, p. 273; Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 39, notes 10–11). It is the center element of the predella.

Representations of the Last Supper abound in Sienese painting, and it is hardly surprising that Sassetta's composition was to a large degree determined by the work of his predecessors. As in Duccio's depiction on the reverse of the *Maestà*, completed in 1311 for the high altar of the cathedral of Siena, Christ is aligned with the vertical axis, while the foreground of the composition is defined by a wooden bench on which the apostles sit, and the back wall is divided vertically into three sections, with a cloth hanging over a rod at the right and a door opening at the left. Sassetta updated the architecture, which Abate Carli noted "is not Gothic" (ff. 81–82), and he has given the scene greater spatial coherence through the use of the Lorenzettian device of three arches flush with the picture plane, and by employing a rigid symmetry that underscores the central projection system.

These changes are only partly explained by Sassetta's predisposition to geometric and spatial clarity, for, whereas the narrative focus of most depictions of the Last Supper is on Christ's announcement of his betrayal and the astonished reactions of the apostles, Sassetta "is concerned neither with betrayal nor communion, but with the actual institution of the Eucharist and with the individual reactions of the apostles to the statement of a spiritual truth" (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 11). This is one of the very few portrayals of the Last Supper in which John, the beloved apostle, is not shown asleep on Christ's breast, and Judas, although without a halo, is almost indistinguishable from his companions. In keeping with the sacramental theme—crucial to the overall program of the altarpiece—the table is barren of any food or utensils save a priestly chalice and two pieces of bread. With one hand Christ indicates the wafer-like bread he holds, and it must be imagined from the reverent expressions of Peter, to his right, and John, to his left, that he has just spoken the words "This is my Body," which are repeated at the consecration of the Host during Mass.

Despite the highly convincing foreshortening of the architecture and a minute attention to such details as the pattern of the linen tablecloth, which was laid in



with the aid of incised lines, the perspective is surprisingly inexact, although the principal orthogonals tend to converge along the vertical axis. However, not since Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco of *Saint Louis of Toulouse before Pope Boniface VIII* in the church of San Francesco, Siena, of almost a century earlier, had the space-defining device of a bench and the varied poses of figures viewed from behind been used so effectively, and only in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, in Ercole de'Roberti's small masterpiece in the National Gallery, London (possibly also part of a Eucharistic predella), was the spiritual rather than the narrative significance of the event again explored with a comparable focus and imaginative faculty (although then in terms of the classical vocabulary of Alberti and Mantegna rather than the inherited conventions of Gothic painting). KC

1 e. The Burning of a Heretic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.6 × 38.7 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, is 2.6 cm. thick and has not been thinned. There is a lipped edge on all sides.

The picture was first published and identified by Zeri (1973, p. 24) as part of the predella of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece. Its ownership prior to that date is not known.

Of the six surviving scenes of Sassetta's predella, this is, perhaps, the most remarkable both in the fascination imparted by the event depicted—for which there is no known literary source—and in the unsurpassed narrative and descriptive skills deployed. The episode seemingly takes place at twilight in an open landscape, just



1 e

outside the walls of a city, where an altar has been set up. A priest, attended by a young acolyte, raises the consecrated Host, while a crowd of devout worshipers, among whom are a cardinal and a Carmelite monk, kneel reverently as a mounted soldier carrying a banner with the arms of the Arte della Lana ("gules, a ram erect and combatant argent confronted by a lion rampant or, and at the honour point a star of six [*sic*: eight] points": de Nicola 1913, p. 208, n. 3) looks on. To the left of the mounted soldier a less disciplined crowd is held in check by guards—some mounted, some on foot—whose shields again display the arms of the Arte della Lana. The focus of the crowd's excitement is the burning of a bearded figure in a dark habit, toward which a winged devil flies.

Two proposals have been made for the identity of this bearded figure, whom Abate Carli (ff. 81–82) wrongly as-

sumed to be Anthony Abbot. The first, put forward in a brilliant study by Scapecchi (1979, p. 24), is that he represents John Hus, the Bohemian reformer who was burned at the stake outside the walls of Constance on July 6, 1415, following the condemnation of 260 heretical passages extracted from the works of John Wycliffe, which included his views on the Eucharist. The strong impression this made on contemporaries is documented in the chronicles of the Sienese painter Bindino da Travale (d. 1418; pp. 313–24). Among the heresies Bindino records is the denial of transubstantiation. He also gives an account of the actual burning: "Two thousand armed men accompanied the master. There were four men who comforted him and pleaded that he renounce what he had said. These were the four major barons that the king [Sigismund] had. . . . Many clerics and doctors followed

his opinions, and there were at least five hundred: many clerics, and they came from afar to see the death of master John Hus. . . . The master sang the *Te Deum*, and master John Hus went cheerfully, so that the king and many people cried. The master entered the countryside courageously and shouted three times: 'Jesus son of the living and true God, *miserere mei*.' He was then set afire, and the fire rose and made great flames; and master John Hus languished and died. And his disciples took his corpse . . . and buried it with great honor." Bindino's account does not accord closely with Sassetta's representation—it would, in any case, be difficult to explain the presence of members of the *Arte della Lana* in a depiction of the burning of Hus.

The second proposal identifies the scene with the execution of Francesco di Pietro Porcari, who was accused of heretical beliefs and burned at the stake outside the Camollia gate of Siena on July 3, 1421 (Mencaraglia 1982, pp. 51–52). Once again, a record of the execution exists. According to the chronicler Paolo di Tommaso Montauri (Muratori XV, vi, p. 795): "Francesco di Pietro Porcari was arrested as a heretic in Siena and placed in the hands of the inquisitor and examined for his opinions and books, and many doctors at the university judged that he should be burned, and such was also the opinion of Cardinal Orsini, who was in Siena; and the Sienese had a council, and read the examination and again the inquisitor passed judgment, and this was on June 2 [1421]. Then on July 3 he was burnt in the field at the Camollia gate, and on July 6 his books and writings were burnt before the cathedral doors." Unfortunately, the precise nature of Porcari's heresies is not recorded.

There remains a third possibility, and that is that the scene does not portray a specific incident, but is meant to allude to the fate of all heretics who, in Bindino da Travale's words, "said of the body of Christ that it did not become blood and flesh . . . [and that] the Host was a semblance of Christ . . . [and that] when the priest is a sinner, the Host does not become blood and flesh and bones. . . ." During the second session of the Church Council in Siena in 1423–24, the heretical positions of Wycliffe and Hus were again denounced and the faithful were urged to suppress their disciples—an action that would have been of specific interest to the *Arte della Lana* and its support of the *Corpus Christi* festivities. This more general reading of the scene would explain the calculated contrast between the raised Host and the devil swooping down to receive the soul of the recalcitrant heretic. It would also clarify the prominence given to the *Arte della Lana*, whose members are portrayed as defenders of the faith, and the reason Sassetta shows the altar covered with a cloth similar in design to that in the scenes of Saint Thomas (cat. 1 a, b) and with a chalice like the one in the *Institution of the Eucharist* (cat. 1 d).

Regardless of how one chooses to read this scene—as an imaginative re-creation of a specific historical event, or as a general admonition—there can be little doubt that the absence of an established pictorial tradition encouraged Sassetta to create one of his most singular masterpieces and to broach a number of themes that gained currency only later in the century. Foremost is his free use of active, strongly foreshortened poses: the horse and rider viewed from behind at the left, the youth who fuels the flames of the fire, the rearing horse in the middle ground, and the upturned heads of the crowd of believers. Zeri (1973, pp. 25–26) compared the horse and rider at the left to a mounted soldier in Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* (National Gallery, London), of about 1450–59, and the youth to an executioner in the predella of Masaccio's Pisa polyptych (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem), suggesting that Sassetta may have seen Masaccio's altarpiece and been influenced by it. This is inherently unlikely. Masaccio did not begin work on the Pisa polyptych until February 1426, when the painting of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece must have been well advanced. Rather, the comparison—like that with Uccello's work—underscores Sassetta's precocious achievement. Indeed, in one respect Sassetta has gone a stage beyond Masaccio in his predella, and that is in the depiction of the distant hills and evening sky, with the streak of light at the horizon. The Lorenzetti had pioneered landscape painting in the first half of the fourteenth century, and Sassetta was certainly indebted to them. Still, only in Gentile da Fabriano's predella to the *Adoration of the Magi*, completed in Florence in 1423, does one find a like response to light and atmosphere. When one considers Gentile's interest in foreshortened poses and active horses, as well as his technical mastery of the use of gold leaf covered with transparent glazes of color to achieve naturalistic effects (such as Sassetta does, to create the damaged flames), then it is not improbable that Gentile's presence in Siena in 1425 provided Sassetta with a crucial impulse to explore a new, more naturalistic style of painting—one that was to undergo yet another profound change about 1430.

KC



1 f. Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Tempera and gold on wood. 24 × 39 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. There is a lipped edge on all sides. In addition to the deliberate defacing of the devils, there is an old graffito: *SCS ATOGNO BASTONATO DA DIAVOIE*

The painting entered the Pinacoteca together with its companion (cat. 1 d) prior to 1842. The scene, frequently represented in Tuscan painting, shows the holy father stoically enduring being beaten by devils who, according to his biographer, Saint Athanasius, continually tried to break his spirit (AA.SS. *Januarii*, ii, p. 488, nos. 16–18, p. 496, no. 69). Scapecchi (1979, pp. 20, 24) explains the devils as the demons of heresy. It is worth pointing out that most of the glazes that modeled the gilt areas of the faces and genitals of the devils have flaked away, expos-

ing the very beautiful drawing with a stylus (especially in the central figure).

The three left-hand scenes of the predella of the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece all take place in architectural interiors of great inventiveness. The two surviving scenes from the right—and in all probability the third missing scene as well—are set in open landscapes with more or less the same horizon line. This is the first step toward the continuous landscape in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow* (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence) of 1430–32. There the impetus was provided by a trip to Florence and Sassetta's firsthand study of Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, in which a connecting line of barren hills joins two adjacent scenes. Here, by contrast, Sassetta's point of departure was the work of the Lorenzetti—not so much the magisterial frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Sala della Pace of the Palazzo

Pubblico, or even the remarkable *Allegory of Redemption* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, as the more schematic hills of Pietro's predella to the Carmine altarpiece. Sassetta has, however, endowed his landscape with greater depth, and his sky—one of the earliest cloud-streaked skies in Italian art (Volpe 1958, p. 83)—has a quality of atmosphere and light that goes beyond anything either Pietro or Ambrogio painted. Gentile da Fabriano may have provided the inspiration.

The tidy foliage of the foreground trees in this animated scene, the suggestive web of brushstrokes used to

define the planes of the rocks, and the tremulous outlines of the distant trees provide an effective contrast with the more loosely painted work of the Lorenzetti, establishing the basis for attributing to Sassetta the two fragmentary landscapes in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (in the past generally ascribed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti), and associating them, albeit tentatively, with the main panel of the Arte della Lana altarpiece, which seems to have had a lasting impact on fifteenth-century Sienese painting (Zeri 1973, pp. 28–33) and so impressed Abate Carli in the eighteenth century.

KC

Sassetta



2 a. The Journey of the Magi

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 21.6 × 29.8 cm. The panel, which has been cut on all sides and thinned to 1.2 cm., has a vertical grain. A curved area along the upper left side of the panel, beginning 11.5 cm. from the bottom and extending inward about 2 cm. along the top edge, has been made up; on the right is a similar, though smaller, area. There are traces of gold along these curves, doubtless from the engaged frame. The picture was cleaned in 1987, at which time a number of spurious details describing rock formations, plants, and additional branches on one of the trees were removed.

2 b. The Adoration of the Magi

Chigi-Saracini Collection (Monte dei Paschi), Siena

Tempera and gold on wood. 31.1 × 38.3 cm.; painted surface 30.5 × 35.5 cm. The panel, which has been thinned to 7 mm. and cradled, has a vertical grain. Despite trimming, the original, lipped edge and traces of gilding from the engaged frame are clearly visible along the bottom and right borders of the paint surface as well as on the lower left vertical border.

Prior to 1939, the two panels were treated as separate works: It was even suggested that the *Journey of the Magi* formed part of the predella of the *Birth of the Virgin* altarpiece in Asciano—at that time ascribed to Sassetta but now generally recognized as by the anonymous Master of the Osservanza (Scharf 1930, I, no. 4). Pope-Hennessy (1939, pp. 77–88) conclusively demonstrated that the panels are fragments of a single composition in which the same three kings were shown twice: journeying to Bethlehem in the background and offering their gifts to the Christ Child in the foreground. The star would have aligned with the Child and the foreshortened beam in the *Adoration* would logically have supported the tiled roof—remnants of which are visible along the right bottom edge of the *Journey of the Magi*. The mutilation of the small altarpiece took place prior to 1829, when the Metropolitan Museum fragment was sold at Christie's, London, as a work by Pinturicchio (Franchi collection; see Lygon and Russell 1980, pp. 113, 116).

The approximate size of the composition is determined by the width of the *Adoration*, which has not been cropped, and by technical evidence that the top of the *Journey* was shaped. A parallel for this is provided by the scenes from the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece in the National Gallery, London, and at Chantilly.

Precedents for the narrative features of this small altarpiece exist in earlier Sienese painting—most notably, in two altarpieces by Bartolo di Fredi in the Pinacoteca, Siena (see fig. 1), and in a cropped panel in the Metropolitan Museum (Pope-Hennessy 1987, pp. 30–32). However,

it is generally accepted that Sassetta's immediate model was the main panel of Gentile da Fabriano's altarpiece of 1423 in the Uffizi, Florence (fig. 2), which Sassetta would have seen on a trip to Florence prior to 1430. The direction of Gentile's composition is reversed, but the inclusion of two female servants, the pose of Saint Joseph, the horse at the left viewed from behind, and the courtly accent with which Sassetta has endowed his work all derive from Gentile's altarpiece.

The two panels have been dated variously: about 1428–29, prior to the *Madonna of the Snow* (Carli 1957, pp. 42–46); between the *Madonna of the Snow* and the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, about 1432–36 (Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 77–80; Brandi 1949, pp. 55–58; Zeri and Gardner 1980, p. 85; Volpe 1982, p. 392; Angelini 1986, p. 42); or after 1444 (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 366). The suggestion of an early date is based on the similarities the composition shares with Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi*. However, these need not imply



2 a, b: scaled reconstruction



2 a



2 b

an early date. In style the picture marks a retreat from the innovative landscapes of the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 e, f), with their irregular hills and light-streaked skies, and, to an even greater extent, from the radical naturalism of the landscapes of the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow*. Rather, the emphasis is on refinement of surface, geometric rhythms, and diaphanous, diffused light. These concerns were to culminate in that masterpiece of imaginative landscape painting, the *Mystic Marriage of Saint Francis* (Musée Condé, Chantilly), from the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, and it is worth noting that the line of stylized cranes, whose trajectory has been determined by a line incised into the paint surface, has a direct parallel in one of the scenes from that altarpiece. The cleaning of the Metropolitan Museum fragment has confirmed its close relationship to the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, and a date of about 1435 seems highly likely. (Scaglia 1968, p. 433, identifies the oldest Magus as a portrait of Emperor Sigismund, whose entry into Siena took place on July 11, 1432, but this is far from certain.)

This new direction in Sassetta's work of the mid-1430s has been attributed to his familiarity with Franco-Flemish illuminations—most specifically, with those of Jacquemart de Hesdin (Berenson 1936, p. 439; Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 80–84, and 1956, p. 366; Brandi 1949, pp. 56–57, is cautious; Carli 1957, pp. 42–44, denies the connection). Similarities with a Book of Hours, illuminated by Jacquemart, in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels (ms. 11060-I), are particularly compelling—even to the inclusion of barren trees used to punctuate the composition—but it must be remembered that Jacquemart himself depended on Sienese painting for many of his landscape conventions (Meiss 1967, pp. 218–20). There can be little question that after about 1435 Sassetta's earlier interest in the spatial experiments of the Lorenzetti was modified by his admiration for the more exquisite and refined work of Simone Martini. Simone's altarpiece of the Blessed Agostino Novello seems particularly relevant. All early critics, beginning with Berenson (1903 b, p. 180), have underscored the relationship between the style of the two fragments and one or another of the works now ascribed to the Master of the Osservanza. There can be little doubt that this stage in Sassetta's career was crucial to the development of that gifted follower and particularly influenced the series devoted to the Life of Saint Anthony Abbot (cat. 10 a–h).

KC

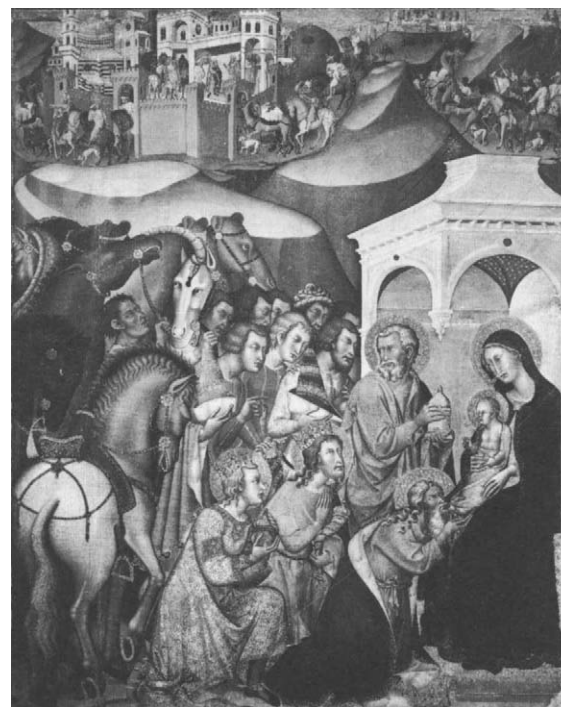


Figure 1. Bartolo di Fredi. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena



Figure 2. Gentile da Fabriano. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

3. Saint Augustine

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 44.7 × 37.3 cm. Aside from the outermost moldings and the inner molding at the base, the frame is original, although cropped at the top. A strip 1 cm. wide along the left pinnacle and 2 cm. wide along the right have been regilt. The panel is 2.8 cm. thick. The picture surface has been excised from the frame, transferred to a new panel, and reengaged.

Saint Augustine, wearing his bishop's miter and a cope (originally crimson lake over metal leaf, but now largely reconstructed) over the black habit of the order he was reputed to have founded, is shown as though viewed from below through a lanceolate window over which his books project. This marvelously refined image, combining the decorative instinct and technical precision characteristic of the finest Gothic art with an interest in the spatial effects associated with Renaissance painting, was published by Zeri (1963, p. 38) as a pinnacle from Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece. Given the close relationship of style and framing design with the surviving elements of that altarpiece, the connection cannot be doubted.

The Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece is one of the crowning achievements of Sienese art and fundamental to any understanding of Sassetta's position in the Renaissance. It was commissioned in 1437 for the high altar of the church of San Francesco in Borgo Sansepolcro (twenty-five miles northeast of Arezzo), painted in Siena over the next seven years, and installed in the church June 2, 1444 (A.S.F. Notarile Antecosimiano S. 870; information kindly furnished by Frank Dabell). Sassetta received the exceptionally high fee of 510 florins. Although the altarpiece, an elaborate, double-sided polyptych, was dismantled between 1578 and 1583 (Scapecchi 1980, pp. 57–58), and its various panels sold during the early nineteenth century (see Davies 1961, pp. 507–8), the principal elements survive. The front comprised the *Madonna and Child with Six Angels* (Louvre, Paris); four lateral panels showing, on the left, the Blessed Ranieri Rasini (who was buried beneath the high altar) and Saint John the Baptist (Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence); and, on the right, Saints Anthony of Padua and John the Evangelist (Louvre); a predella, of which three scenes with miracles of the Blessed Ranieri Rasini survive (one in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem, and two in the Louvre: see Thiébaud 1988, pp. 48–54); and a series of pinnacles, very likely including, at the center, a much-damaged, recut, and repainted panel of the *Annunciation* (Robert Lehman Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Pope-Hennessy 1987, pp. 102–4), as well as the *Saint Augustine*. On the reverse was a figure of Saint Francis in Ecstasy (Villa I Tatti) flanked by

eight scenes from his Life, disposed in two rows to each side (seven in the National Gallery, London, and one in the Musée Condé, Chantilly: on their order, see Braham 1978, pp. 386–90); a predella—probably but not certainly including three scenes of the Passion (The Detroit Institute of Arts: see Laclotte 1960, p. 52; Béguin 1978, p. 33)—and a series of pinnacles, the center one representing Saint Francis adoring the crucified Christ (The Cleveland Museum of Art). The polyptych would have had piers decorated with figures of saints, four of which have been identified: a Saint Christopher, now in the Perkins Collection, Sacro Convento, Assisi; Saints Stephen and Lawrence, in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow; and an Evangelist, in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice (Zeri 1963, p. 38). The relative positions of the subsidiary elements remain a matter of speculation (see Béguin 1978, pp. 29–34).

Although the Gothic form of the polyptych was stipulated by the contract (Borghesi and Banchi 1898, pp. 119–20; Davies 1961, pp. 568–70; see also Gardner von Teuffel 1977, pp. 34–36), the framing must have been designed by Sassetta, and is notable both for its delicacy and for the extent to which its profile has been incorporated as an element of the pictorial design. Whereas in his two earlier altarpieces—the *Madonna of the Snow* and the polyptych in Cortona—the strongly three-dimensional figures and emphatic spatial structure generate a dynamic tension with the Gothic framework, in the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece the frame and the pictorial content are fully integrated. This is evident in the way that the miter of Saint Augustine fills the upper arch of the frame while the curve of his shoulder echoes the lower portion. Sassetta's interest in describing a plausible space, and his attention to foreshortening—manifest in the stack of books before Saint Augustine or in the disk-like irises of his eyes—was as keen as ever, but the feeling for geometry that informs these compositional details is increasingly allied to a decorative rather than a dramatic, expressive end. By comparison with the proto-Renaissance *Madonna of the Snow*, the result is distinctly—and exquisitely—Gothic in flavor: at once reevoking the courtly world of Simone Martini while transposing it to a more modern spatial setting. In all likelihood, it was this remarkable balance between surface refinement and geometric space that aroused the admiration of Piero della Francesca when the altarpiece was installed in Borgo Sansepolcro.

KC





4. Madonna and Child with Angels

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 80.6 × 50.2 cm.; painted surface 63.8 × 34.3 cm. The panel has not been thinned. The molding at the top may be original, but the side and bottom elements of the frame are modern.

A wax seal on the back, inscribed MANIFAT DI ROMA 1814, provides the earliest record of the picture, which is in extremely fine condition for a work by Sassetta. The blue of the Virgin's cloak has badly deteriorated, but the translucent glazes of the pavement, the robes of the angels, and the veil of the Virgin are intact. Even the original, grayish-colored varnish of egg white seems to be substantially preserved. An old candle burn in the lower right attests to the function of the picture as an altar-piece, probably in a private chapel.

The depiction of the Virgin seated on the ground in a position of humility, alternatively holding or nursing her child, was one of the most influential contributions of fourteenth-century Sienese art (Meiss 1951, pp. 132–56). In Siena its popularity lasted until the mid-fifteenth cen-

tury, when it was eclipsed by bust-length images of the Madonna and Child flanked by saints and angels, usually shown on a smaller scale. So far as can be determined, Sassetta never painted an image of the latter type, popularized instead by Sano di Pietro. However, he produced at least seven independent paintings of the Madonna of Humility. The configuration of these, as formulated in the center panel of his polyptych in the Museo Diocesano, Cortona, remained surprisingly constant: The Virgin, placed at an angle to the picture plane, is seated on an elaborately embroidered cushion, one knee raised to support an active Christ Child and the other lowered. A notional interior setting is defined by a strongly foreshortened tiled pavement or richly patterned carpet. On only one occasion does Sassetta seem to have departed from this formula by replacing the interior setting with a flowering garden and a hedge of roses. The painting does not survive, but its appearance can be reconstructed from two pictures by Giovanni di Paolo in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Pope-Hennessy 1937, pp. 25–26), and, to an even greater degree, from a picture by Sano di Pietro in the

Sassetta

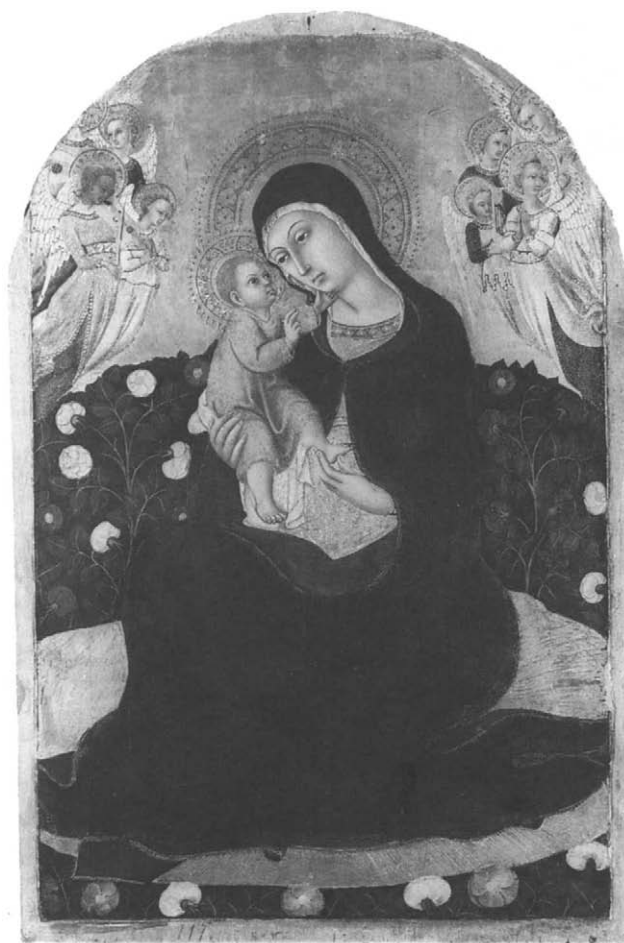


Figure 1. Sano di Pietro. *Madonna of Humility*. Museo Civico, Montalcino

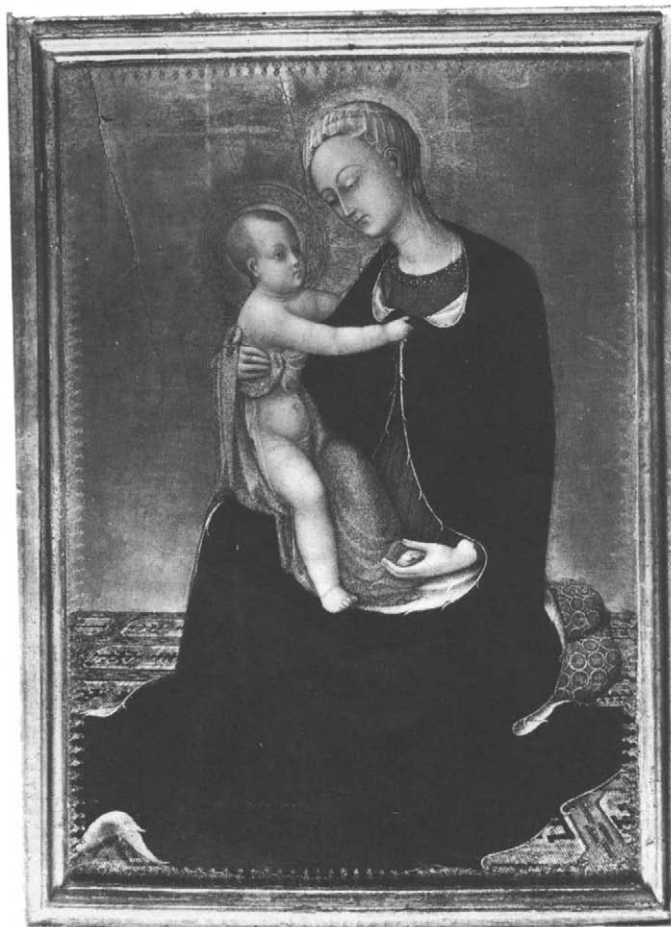


Figure 2. Sassetta. *Madonna of Humility*. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

Museo Civico, Montalcino (fig. 1), which must more or less replicate the lost composition.

The date and even the attribution of these works have been debated (Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 68–69; Brandi 1949, p. 55; Carli 1957, pp. 36–40), but the pictures seem to have been painted at various times during the last two decades of Sassetta's career. The beautifully preserved panel in the Vatican (see fig. 2) must be of approximately the same date as the polyptych in Cortona (from about 1433–35), while the smaller and less fine picture in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in which the pose of the Child and the position of the left hand and head of the Virgin are taken from the fragmentary panel of a dismembered altarpiece by Sassetta in Grosseto, is somewhat later. The ravishing but damaged picture in the Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh, is contemporary with the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece—from which the angels suspending a crown viewed *di sotto in sù* are manifestly derived. This motif recurs in the large, ruined panel in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, which is identifiable with a picture painted in 1438 for the Palazzo Pubblico (see p. 31, note 8); in the small painting in Zagreb; and in two additional panels—the one in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem, and the present picture—that must have been painted at the end of Sassetta's career (Zeri and Gardner 1980, p. 84).¹ In both the Berlin and the New York pictures a simple rectangular or pointed panel has been abandoned in favor of one with an elaborate double-curved top containing a half-length figure of God surrounded by cherubim and a descending dove.

Judged against the earlier painting in Pittsburgh or even that in Zagreb, the composition of the Metropolitan Museum's *Madonna and Child* may seem formulaic and lacking in interpretive invention, and two critics have, in fact, expressed reservations about its authorship (Brandi 1949, p. 190, n. 32; Torriti 1977, p. 246). These doubts, however, are groundless, since what the picture lacks in naturalness and spontaneity is compensated by a refinement of detail and a hypersensitivity to abstraction (the pattern traced by the contours of the symmetrical angels and the ovoid head of the Virgin, with her incised lips). These are the hallmarks of Sassetta's last two major commissions, which he left incomplete at his death. This tendency to abstraction is, in turn, allied to a desire to transcend the realm of the merely human and to impart "a sense of immaculate divinity" (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 69).

KC

1. Of the related pictures that have been attributed to Sassetta, the one formerly in the Castelli Mignanelli collection, Rome (now in the collection of Luigi Magnani), is almost certainly an early work by Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio (Volpe 1956, p. 54), while the panel in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, regarded as the work of Sassetta by Zeri and Natale (1984, pp. 33–34), is, in all likeli-

hood, by the anonymous associate christened by Carli (1957, p. 122) the Master of Pienza. By contrast, the panel from Basciano, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, seems, at the very least, to have been based on a cartoon by Sassetta and probably dates from the early 1430s (*Arte in Valdelsa* 1963, no. 40; Zeri 1963, p. 249).

ATTRIBUTED TO SASSETTA

5. Roman Missal

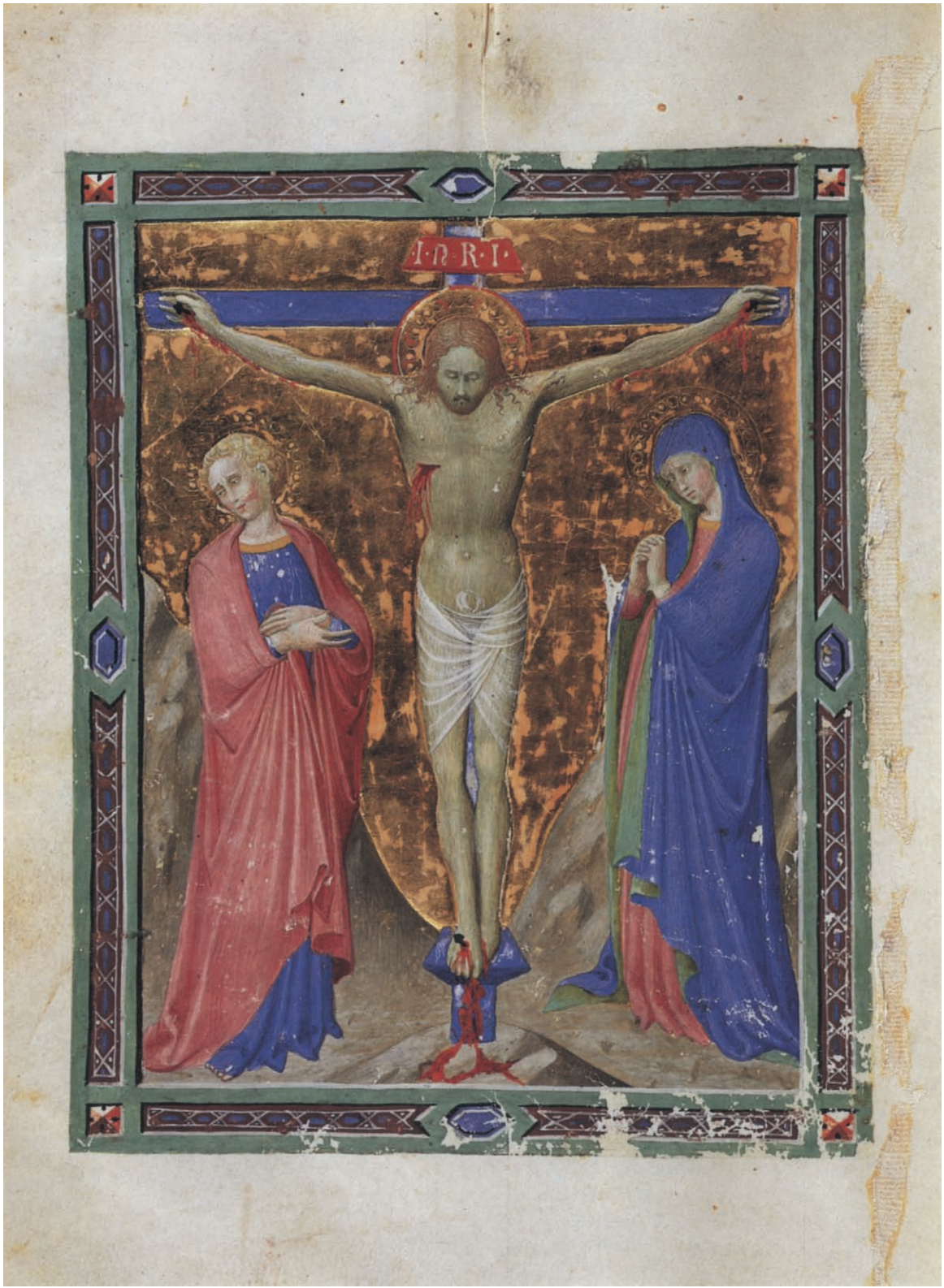
Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena (codex G.V. 7)

Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment. The codex consists of 205 folios 25 × 18 cm. The numeration is modern. Folios 7 r and 92 v are illuminated. For a detailed description of the contents see Garosi (1982, p. 385).

There is no mention of the Missal prior to 1846, when it was catalogued in the Biblioteca Comunale, and the idea that it may have been made for the cathedral of Siena (Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto 1984, p. 135) is without foundation. The Missal is of interest for the two illuminated pages it contains: One, f. 7 r, the first page of the Proper of the Time, shows a bust-length figure of Christ blessing in the initial *E* (4 × 4 cm.) and a winged putto in the border, and the other, f. 92 v, is decorated with a magnificent, full-page illustration of the crucified Christ flanked by mourning figures of Saint John the Evangelist and the Virgin (16.5 × 13 cm.). Exceptionally, Saint John is on the left and the Virgin on the right.

These illuminations were first published with an attribution to Sassetta and a dating of 1435–40 by Schoenburg Waldenburg (1975, pp. 267–75). Although the attribution has been widely accepted (Pope-Hennessy 1982, p. 719; Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto 1984, p. 135; Volpe 1982, p. 385; Boskovits 1983, p. 267; and Angelini 1986, p. 34), it is, nonetheless, problematic, as is the dating.

The compact yet vigorously posed putto on f. 7 r, his legs entwined around a pole whose tip he gnaws, is an invention worthy of Sassetta, and bears a suggestive similarity to the Child in Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori's statue of the *Madonna and Child* at Istia d'Ombrone. Comparisons between Domenico's sculpture and Sassetta's paintings have been noted (see Bagnoli 1987, pp. 105, 192), but it is difficult to interpret the direction of the influence and whether, indeed, an influence is at issue. Two further details are relevant to the attribution and dating of the illuminations. The first is the Christ blessing on f. 7 r, which closely resembles the figure of Christ in the *Institution of the Eucharist* from the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 d). The other is the frontal figure of Christ crucified on f. 92 v. Schoenburg Waldenburg (1975, p. 270) has pointed out the probable



5: f. 92 v (enlarged)



5: f. 7 r

dependence of this figure on the monumental crucifix painted by Sassetta in 1433 for the church of San Martino in Siena. The crucifix was destroyed in 1820 (the terminal figures are, however, preserved in the Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena), but its appearance can be convincingly reconstructed on the basis of later derivations (see Salmi 1967, pp. 54–58). As in the Missal, the painted crucifix seems to have shown Christ frontally with his bowed head foreshortened and the arm of the cross viewed *di sotto in sù*. This remarkable and influential conception may have been inspired by the pinnacle of Masaccio's Pisa polyptych (now in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples), although Volpe (1982, p. 385) has also compared the Christ in the illumination to the crucifix that addresses Saint Thomas Aquinas in one of the scenes from the predella of the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 a). It is with the Arte della Lana altarpiece that the most compelling analogies of style can be made (Volpe 1982, p. 385). Nonetheless, it is difficult to believe that this

monumental and reticent image, in which the cross is planted immediately behind the frame and in front of the two mourning figures—who are thus detached from it both spatially and emotionally—is not derived directly from the San Martino crucifix.

If this is so, then an attribution to Sassetta must be abandoned, for, although a date in the mid- to late 1430s has been accepted (Pope-Hennessy 1982, p. 719; Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto 1984, p. 135), the simple forms and unaffected grace of the Saint John and the Virgin have little in common with documented works by Sassetta from the mid-1430s. Nor is a comparison of the figure of Christ to the *Crucified Christ Adored by Saint Francis* in The Cleveland Museum of Art—a pinnacle from the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, of 1437–44—any more encouraging. Although an attribution to Sassetta and a date in the 1420s cannot be ruled out, the balance of probability is that the miniature was painted in the 1430s by a highly gifted follower who employed direct and purposeful borrowings.

Avril (1983, p. 342) has noted that the pale green fictive molding has a precise analogy in the cutting in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, showing the burial of Saint Monica (cat. 9 a), which he attributes to Sassetta, but which is here ascribed to the Master of the Osservanza. The connection between these two works is, indeed, close, although they need not be by the same hand. The framing motif is of considerable interest in that it derives from a tradition of mural painting that can be traced to Simone Martini. There are analogies with Simone's fresco cycle in the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi, but the immediate model would seem to have been his *Guidoriccio da Fogliano* in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena (for a balanced discussion of this maligned masterpiece, see Martindale 1986). This type of frame was adopted, in turn, by Sano di Pietro in his illuminations for the Antiphonary in the Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna (cat. 21), as well as by Pellegrino di Mariano in an illuminated page in the Fitzwilliam Museum (cat. 39 c). The use of this motif clearly points up the improbability of the artist's training as a miniaturist.

KC

PIETRO DI GIOVANNI D'AMBROGIO

(or Ambrosi)

1409/10–1448

An artist of remarkable inventiveness and narrative genius, Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio remains a somewhat shadowy figure in the history of Sienese painting. Today, he is best known for his images of Saint Bernardino, two of which are dated, and his altarpiece of the Nativity in Asciano, east of Siena. His career was certainly extensive, despite its brevity.

His name appears in the painters' guild in 1428, and he was presumably active as an independent master throughout the 1430s. However, his documented works date from the last decade of his life. In 1440 he was paid for an unspecified commission in Città di Castello as well as for two frescoes in the infirmary of the Spedale della Scala, Siena (all three are lost). The *Saint Bernardino* in the Church of the Osservanza is dated 1444, the year Bernardino died, as is the processional standard (in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris) painted for a confraternity in Borgo Sansepolcro. A frescoed *Crucifixion* in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, is dated 1446; the *Saint Bernardino* in Lucignano, 1448. Some frescoed scenes in the inner cloister of the Augustinian hermitage at Lecceto, painted in 1442, can be attributed to him with confidence, while a miniature in the Biblioteca Trivulziana, Milan (codex 138), made for Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, is datable to 1446–47.

As the above list suggests, Pietro di Giovanni seems to have been much appreciated outside Siena, and it may be that some of his earlier commissions also came from smaller centers under Siena's dominion. In 1445, Pietro di Giovanni subcontracted with Vecchietta to work on the reliquary cupboard (the *Arliquiera*) for the sacristy of the Spedale della Scala (now in the Siena Pinacoteca), and it is likely that in the 1430s he worked in a similar capacity for Sassetta, the single greatest influence on Pietro di Giovanni's work and probably his teacher. Sassetta provided the example for Pietro di Giovanni's interest in earlier Sienese painting.

It is, however, Pietro di Giovanni's contact with and emulation of isolated aspects of Florentine art that give his work its special pungency and interest (see especially Laclotte 1985). He must have visited Florence in the late 1420s or early 1430s, prior to a documented trip in 1445, when he would have admired Domenico Veneziano's *Saint Lucy* altarpiece (Uffizi, Florence), reflected in his own fragmentary *Madonna and Child* in the Acton collection, Florence. His borrowings could be fairly direct, but, as with Giovanni di Paolo, they emerge transformed by a restless, sometimes hectic, and always eccentric imagination.

6. Saint Michael and Saint Nicholas of Bari

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. Each 29.7×13.4 cm.;
painted surface 24.5×7.5 cm. The tooled frames, which
are modern, were added prior to 1885 to adapt the panels
as wings to a *Madonna and Child* by Naddo Ceccarelli,
also in the Lehman Collection; at that time the upper
edges may have been cut slightly (Pope-Hennessy 1987,
pp. 24, 112).

Saint Michael, wearing an elaborate gold suit of armor (now mostly reduced to the bole preparation), is shown with the flame of the Holy Spirit on his head. He grips the severed head of a serpent with one hand (Revelation 12:7–9) and a white shield decorated with a red cross with the other. Saint Nicholas, whose cope was originally a red glaze over gold (now all but lost), holds a bishop's crosier and the three golden balls used to provide the dowry for a like number of poor girls.

Like so many of Pietro di Giovanni's works, these two highly distinctive panels were long attributed to Sassetta (see Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 68, 91, n. 30). They were first ascribed to Pietro di Giovanni by Brandi (1943, p. 137, and 1949, p. 208, n. 71), who, however, wrongly considered them elements from the pilasters of an altarpiece. Longhi (1940, p. 189, n. 28) recognized that they formed the shutters to a *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Dorothy* in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem (see fig. 1). (Technical evidence supports this association: see Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 112.) However, whereas there are analogies in Pietro di Giovanni's work for the *Saint Michael* in the Lehman Collection—most notably, in an armored soldier in the *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* in the Pinacoteca Vaticana (see Laclotte 1985, p. 107)—the Berlin panel seems, superficially, less characteristic, and attributions to the young Domenico di Bartolo (Longhi 1940, pl. 189, n. 28; Volpe 1963, p. 37) or Vecchietta (Pope-Hennessy 1944, p. 143) have been proposed.

The elaborate technique, employing areas of glazed gold tooled with a striated pattern, occurs in all three panels and is characteristic of Sassetta and his pupils and associates; there is no parallel for it in the work of either Domenico di Bartolo or Vecchietta. Nor is there any real relationship of style to Domenico di Bartolo's early *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter and Paul* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington (cat. 40). A precedent for the base of the Virgin's throne and the flowery meadow in the Berlin panel is established by Domenico Veneziano's *Carnesecchi Tabernacle* in the National Gallery, London, which probably dates from the early 1430s and could have been seen by Pietro di Giovanni during a trip to Florence. The gesture



Figure 1. Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio.
*Madonna and Child with Saints John the
Baptist and Dorothy*. Gemäldegalerie,
Berlin-Dahlem

and type of the Saint John the Baptist, the pose of the Virgin in general, and the foreshortened sides of the throne, seem, by contrast, to derive from Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence) of 1430–32. There is, therefore, strong evidence that the small, portable triptych was painted in the mid-1430s, at a time when Pietro di Giovanni was keenly receptive to the most novel pictorial experiments of the day.

The athletic pose of Saint Michael is especially remarkable, recalling in its animation Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori's statue of Saint George in the Acton collection, Florence, rather than the more planar Saint Michael in Sassetta's altarpiece in Cortona, which, however, probably inspired it. Just as advanced is the sculptural figure of Saint Nicholas, whose highlighted features and ponderous stance seem to reflect Pietro di Giovanni's acquaintance with Masaccio's work. Never again was Pietro di Giovanni to attempt such a stern, carefully articulated figure.

KC





7. Madonna and Child with Cherubim

The Brooklyn Museum

Tempera and gold on wood. 111.5 × 62.2 cm.; painted surface 97.8 × 52.7 cm. The panel, approximately 4 cm. thick, is vertically grained and has not been thinned. The upper edges are original, as is their inner molding. The bottom has been cut and the sides may also have been slightly cropped. Aside from the molding already mentioned, the engaged frame is not original.

This damaged but impressive picture, the cut-down center panel of a polyptych, was purchased by Frank Babbot in 1922 and attributed to Pietro di Giovanni by van Marle (1927, IX, p. 385). Brandi (1943, p. 138) noted its dependence on Sassetta's equally fragmentary *Madonna and Child* in Grosseto, where the Child is likewise shown at an oblique angle seated on a cushion with his outstretched right hand clutching at his mother's mantle. Two works by Sano di Pietro, of 1447 and 1449, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, and a *Madonna and Child* in the Lehman Collection (cat. 13) provide parallels for the position of the two cherubim.

Zeri (in Volpe 1982, p. 407) has identified a fragmentary painting of Saint Augustine, in the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg (for which, see Oertel 1961, pp. 101–2), as a lateral panel of this putative triptych, and has further proposed as the predella the *Birth of Saint Nicholas of Bari* in the Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel (cat. 8 a), the *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* in the Pinacoteca Stuard, Parma (cat. 8 b), and a scene of an unidentified female saint, in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem. Although this reconstruction has been endorsed both by Volpe and by Laclotte (1985, p. 108), a problem is posed by the painting in Berlin, which cannot be convincingly identified with an episode from the Life of Saint Augustine (see Kaftal 1952, col. 1052; *Berlin Catalogue of Paintings* 1978, p. 328). The Altenburg *Saint Augustine* is cropped and similar in shape to the *Madonna and Child*, and the two are likely to have originated from the same altarpiece.

These panels have been dated variously. The *Madonna and Child* has been considered a late work (Brandi 1943, p. 138; Volpe 1956, p. 52) and, more reasonably, placed in the first half of Pietro di Giovanni's short career (Volpe 1963, p. 38, and 1982, p. 408; Laclotte 1985, p. 108). Crucial to the dating is the picture's dependence on Sassetta's *Madonna and Child* in Grosseto, of about 1435, and the absence of those refinements of color and design Pietro di Giovanni introduced into his work on the model of Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, completed in 1444. Typical of this moment in Pietro di Giovanni's career in the years around 1440 is the homely detail of the Virgin's exposed ear—shown covered in Sassetta's panel in Grosseto—and the stiff, affectionate gesture of

the Christ Child, whose blanket falls in folds as stylized as in a piece of archaic sculpture. This bold, abstracting instinct is also apparent in the hem of the cope worn by Saint Augustine, and a comparison of this figure with his counterpart in the late altarpiece in Asciano will reveal the evolution of Pietro di Giovanni's style from an almost Giottesque (or in this case Lorenzettian) severity to a brilliant, neo-Gothic elegance—always, however, under the presiding influence of Sassetta. Interestingly, analogies to the pyramidal shape of the panels in Brooklyn and in Altenburg are to be found in late-thirteenth-century dossals rather than in fifteenth-century altarpieces.

KC

8 a. The Birth of Saint Nicholas of Bari

Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum

Tempera and gold on wood. 26 × 32 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. There are remnants of a raised, lipped edge along the bottom; the other edges have been partly made up.

The newborn Nicholas is shown miraculously standing in his bath—a large majolica bowl of Valencian or Florentine manufacture—while his nurses and his bedridden mother look on in surprise. The miracle, frequently portrayed, is recounted in *The Golden Legend*.

The picture, initially attributed to Sassetta (Schubring 1915, p. 72), was recognized as the work of Pietro di Giovanni by Longhi (1928, p. 38, n. 1), who, however, mistakenly identified the subject as the Birth of the Virgin. It has been dated after 1444 (Brandi 1943, p. 138; Volpe 1956, p. 52), but its clear dependence on the style of the Arte della Lana altarpiece and on the *Madonna of the Snow* by Sassetta argues for an earlier dating (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 166; Berenson 1968, p. 4; Volpe 1982, pp. 407–8; Laclotte 1985, p. 108), possibly in the late 1430s. The view through an open doorway to a courtyard with a hexagonal well derives from Sassetta's scene of *Saint Thomas Aquinas in Prayer* (cat. 1 b). However, here the perspective is centralized, with the principal orthogonals (excluding those of the well) receding to a point situated in the middle of the doorway. Single-point perspective, with the transversals determined empirically, is first employed by Sassetta in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow* of 1430–32, and it is from the *Vision of the Patrician John* from that predella that Pietro di Giovanni has apparently imitated the complicated (and architecturally implausible) projecting wing of the palace, above which he shows a cloud-streaked sky. In

Pietro di Giovanni
d'Ambrogio

Pietro di Giovanni
d'Ambrogio



8 a

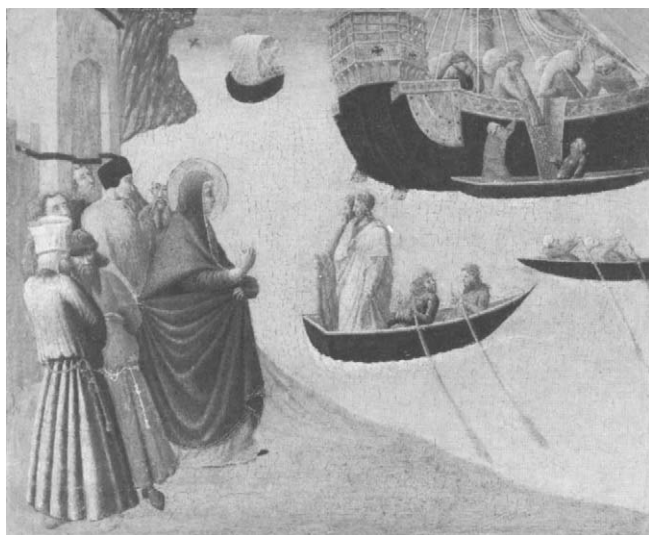


Figure 1. Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio. *A Miracle of Saint Augustine (?)*. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem

Sassetta's work architecture invariably serves both to define pictorial space and to articulate the narrative.

Pietro di Giovanni's approach was more ambivalent. In this scene, the unobstructed plunge into depth disrupts the narrative, whose bilateral composition is barely maintained by two chattering servants approaching their mistress's bedchamber, which is incongruously cut off from any possible view of the miracle. An analogy to this seemingly idiosyncratic attitude toward space and narrative as independent elements in a composition is found in Masolino's fresco of the *Raising of Tabitha* in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, and there can be little doubt that Masolino's delight in perspective as an end in itself as well as his love of genre-like details with little pertinence to the event depicted deeply impressed Pietro di Giovanni. There can be no question that Pietro di Giovanni visited Florence in the late 1420s or early 1430s and studied the new monuments of Renaissance art; the predella divided between the Vatican and the Louvre, perhaps slightly earlier in date than the *Birth of Saint Nicholas*, contains a quote from Masolino's fresco (Lacotte 1985, pp. 109–10). Even more to the point, the composition of a panel in Berlin-Dahlem (see fig. 1) that has been associated with the *Birth of Saint Nicholas* on the basis of style, and almost certainly came from the same predella (Volpe 1982, p. 407; Lacotte 1985, p. 108), is a free copy of a panel by Ambrogio Lorenzetti that was then in the church of San Procolo, Florence (it is now in the Uffizi).

In this predella, then, the most advanced experiments of Sassetta are combined with an interest in the more courtly aspects of contemporary Florentine art, on the one hand, and with the century-old traditions of Sienese painting, on the other. It is this highly personal, even ec-

centric amalgam that gives the *Birth of Saint Nicholas* its special, homespun character—no longer Gothic, yet not truly Renaissance.

The central scene of the predella has been identified with the *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* (cat. 8 b) in the Pinacoteca Stuard, Parma (Volpe 1982, p. 407; Cirillo and Godi 1987, p. 33). The subject is highly unconventional for a predella, but the association is plausible on grounds of style; the dimensions also accord with those of the other two panels. This predella may belong with the *Madonna and Child* in Brooklyn (cat. 7) and the *Saint Augustine* in Altenburg, as Zeri (in Volpe 1982, p. 407) suggested, but only if it can be demonstrated that the panel in Berlin illustrates an event from the Life of Saint Augustine (the miracle has thus far eluded a convincing interpretation: see Kaftal 1952, col. 1052).

KC

8 b. The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem

Pinacoteca Giuseppe Stuard, Parma

Tempera and gold on wood. 26 × 54 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. There are remnants of the original, lipped edge on all sides.

Christ's entry into Jerusalem, recounted in detail in the Gospels, was a subject eminently suited to Sienese sensibilities. It was treated in two early-fourteenth-century masterpieces, the reverse side of Duccio's *Maestà* in the cathedral and Pietro Lorenzetti's Passion cycle in the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi. The story only appears in cycles of Christ's Passion, and it is as such that it was included in the predella of Taddeo di Bartolo's altarpiece of 1401 in the cathedral of Montepulciano. The painting by Pietro di Giovanni is the one case in which the event, isolated from a Passion cycle, is the center of a predella flanked by unrelated scenes—assuming that the reconstruction of the predella proposed by Zeri (in Volpe 1982, p. 407) on the basis of style and technical evidence is correct. It must be assumed that the church or monastery for which the altarpiece was made held special devotions on Palm Sunday that the predella was meant to commemorate.

The celebration of Palm Sunday processions would partly explain the remarkably anecdotal interpretation of the event, which includes not only such traditional details as the crowd of astonished apostles following after Christ, the citizens of Jerusalem waving their branches at the city gate (portrayed as one of the gates of Siena), or the youths cutting down branches from trees while others spread their cloaks before Christ, but a figure

Pietro di Giovanni
d'Ambrogio



8 b

hoeing his garden plot, surrounded by a wattle fence, and another bearing a load through the carefully described garden door. The motif of a garden alongside Jerusalem occurs in Duccio's rendition and is certainly a reference to the Garden of Gethsemane where Christ was later to be betrayed (see Deuchler 1984, pp. 169–72, for a discussion of Duccio's depiction). There can be little doubt that Pietro di Giovanni's principal source of inspiration was Duccio's scene, which he has, however, endowed with the spatial complexity of Sassetta's predella panels to the *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (cat. 1 a–f) and the altarpiece of the *Madonna of the Snow* (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence).

At the left, the viewer looks down into a garden, the wall of which is arbitrarily cut off by the bottom edge of the picture (the principal details of the city gate recede to an area above the garden wall at the height of the branch-waving crowd). The audacious foreshortening of the architectural elements was influenced directly by Sassetta's work. By contrast, at the right the scene is viewed straight on, with the apostles grouped in strict isoccephaly. It is a subjective interpretation of space conditioned by the viewer's empathetic participation in the event and his presumed climb through the picture field with the incline of the road Christ travels. The single

vanishing point and the fixed distance achieved by means of an orthodox perspective scheme have as little place here as Pietro di Giovanni's higgledy-piggledy city would have in Florentine art.

Perhaps no other picture by Pietro di Giovanni underscores his remarkable narrative genius and his ability to assimilate specific details from contemporary Florentine painting as well as the spatial and optical experiments of Sassetta into an inherently irrational approach to painting. The row of apostles, with their overlapping heads, derives from Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, while the pebble-strewn path and the quality of light depend on Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece. The wonderfully described donkey Christ rides would be unthinkable without Sassetta's scene of the building of Santa Maria Maggiore in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow*.

The scene was first recorded in 1787, when in the Tacoli Canacci collection, Florence, as a work by Fra Angelico. It was purchased by Giuseppe Stuard in 1829 (see Cirillo and Godi 1987, p. 33). Longhi (1928, p. 38, n. 1) attributed it to Pietro di Giovanni following its ascription to Sassetta by Berenson (van Marle 1927, IX, p. 361, n. 1).

KC

MASTER OF THE OSSERVANZA

active in the second quarter of the XVth century

The name of the painter derives from a triptych in the Church of the Osservanza outside Siena and applies to a group of works that, until 1940 (Longhi 1940, pp. 188–89, n. 26), were universally attributed to Sassetta and dated to the mid-1430s. These include, in addition to the Osservanza triptych and its predella (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena); a *Pietà with Saint Sebaldu and a Donor* (Monte dei Paschi, Siena); a large altarpiece of the Birth of the Virgin (Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano); the series of scenes from the Life of Saint Anthony and a predella of Christ's Passion, both included here (cat. 10 a–h, 12 a–d); a predella with the Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew (Siena Pinacoteca); and a number of small or fragmentary panels in various collections. Only two of these works are approximately datable on external grounds. The *Pietà*, which includes a portrait of a prominent Nuremberg citizen, Peter Volckamer, can only have been painted between July 1432 and November 1433 (von Erffa 1976, pp. 4–7). The Osservanza triptych bears an inscription and a date of 1436 referring to the founding of a chapel in the church of San Maurizio by Mano Orlandi. The altarpiece may have been commissioned at this time: it seems to have been installed by 1441, when the chapel is referred to as though completed, but its first certain mention was in an inventory datable on circumstantial evidence to about 1448 (Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 14–16). An altarpiece of Saint George Slaying the Dragon (San Cristoforo, Siena), alternatively attributed to the Master of the Osservanza or to Sano di Pietro, has a direct bearing on any chronological assessment in that it was provided for by Giorgio Tolomei in August 1440 (Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 18). However, a book cover (*biccherna*) of 1444 in the Siena archives has no pertinence (it is by an unrelated artist).

The Master of the Osservanza is unquestionably one of the outstanding Siennese artists of the second quarter of the fifteenth century. He may, as Graziani (1948, p. 81) suggested, have been trained by the adopted son of Taddeo di Bartolo, Gregorio di Cecco di Luca, but Sassetta provided the strongest stimulus. That the Master of the Osservanza actually worked with Sassetta in the 1420s may be deduced from his repetition of decorative details favored by Sassetta, such as the geometric interlacing that ornaments the hems of the garments of his female figures and the cushions on which they are seated. Equally indicative of Sassetta's influence is the Master of the Osservanza's preference for glazed silver and gold to achieve naturalistic effects. Yet, his vision was more worldly than Sassetta's. His religious narratives are conceived in terms of the aristocratic aspirations of contemporary Siennese society, and his landscapes re-create the barren beauty of southern Tuscany. Unlike Sassetta, the Master of the Osservanza was little interested in the revolutionary art of Masaccio, preferring instead the more Gothic art of Masolino. His love of pure colors and decorative patterns, and his emphasis on a refined technique are quintessentially Siennese.

Since 1940, three principal theories have been advanced concerning his training and identity: Longhi's position, that he was an independent master with "a culture parallel to that of Sassetta but more insistently archaic"; that he is identifiable with the early phase of Sano di Pietro prior to 1444 (see especially Brandi 1949, pp. 69–87); and that his work is substantially later than commonly thought and that he may be Francesco di Bartolomeo Alfei, whose recorded activity extends from 1453 to 1483

(Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 29–33). There is no documentary basis for the last thesis, which dissociates the master's work from that of Sassetta on which it depends and, of necessity, rejects the attribution of the early *Pietà*. The identification with the young Sano di Pietro is also difficult to accept: Nowhere in Sano's documented pictures does he exhibit the refined sensibility found in the best works associated with the Master of the Osservanza. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that a close relationship between the two artists existed.

The most convincing solution to this complex problem is that the paintings grouped around the Osservanza triptych are the products of a collaborative workshop, or *compagnia*, of two or more masters sharing materials, assistants, and commissions (see, most recently, Angelini 1986, p. 46). This was a far from uncommon practice in Siena, and it would explain the variation in quality and style encountered in these pictures (see cat. 10 a–h). It is worth noting that between 1428 and 1439, when most of the works in question were probably painted, there is no mention of Sano di Pietro's activity as an independent artist. On the other hand, between 1426 and 1444 the otherwise unknown Vico di Luca is consistently cited in documents as the head of precisely the sort of *compagnia* proposed here (see Milanesi 1854, II, pp. 48, 244; Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 166). In 1442, Vico di Luca collaborated with Sassetta on the production of banners for the cathedral of Siena. He is last mentioned in 1449. As Graziani (1948, p. 88) first tentatively proposed, he is the most likely candidate for the Master of the Osservanza, although the matter remains conjectural. It is quite probable that one of the Master of the Osservanza's colleagues was Sano di Pietro.

9 a. The Burial of Saint Monica and Saint Augustine Departing for Africa

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Marlay cutting It. 12)

Tempera and gold on vellum. 24.7 × 27 cm. The gold background has been renewed.

This cutting from a choir book (the words and music are obscured by the mount) was exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1908 (no. 104: *Legend of a Benedictine Saint*, Sienese school) and at the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, in 1983 (no. 123). Between those dates it attracted surprisingly little attention, considering that this is one of the most beautiful miniatures from the first half of the fifteenth century (for the earlier literature, see Wormald and Giles 1982, pp. 108–9). To the left, beneath the blue vaults of a proto-Renaissance ciborium, an aged female saint in a black habit is shown interred in a pale pink marble sarcophagus of Ghibertian elegance. The same saint appears above, supported by two angels emerging from clouds. Behind the ciborium, to the right, is a sharply declining cliff beyond which is a ship bearing seven monks (one is bearded) and three laymen to a pink-colored city visible on the distant shore. Astonishingly enough, the monks have been described

as nuns and the haloed figure on the ship confused with the female saint. On this basis the scene has been considered unidentifiable (Kaftal 1952, col. 1065; Avril 1983, p. 342). There can be no doubt that the subject is the burial of Saint Monica at Ostia and the subsequent departure of her thirty-three-year-old son for Africa, as recounted in book IX of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 35, n. 87). An analogy for the composition is Benozzo Gozzoli's later fresco of the *Death of Saint Monica* in the choir of Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano.

The subject is of crucial importance in that it provides a firm basis for identifying two further cuttings from the same set of choir books and for suggesting their probable provenance. One of these, from the collection of Lord Clark, shows the *Baptism of Saint Augustine Witnessed by Saint Monica* (formerly Dennistoun collection; exhibited at Wildenstein, London, 1965, no. 95: school of Sassetta). The other shows the Virgin surrounded by saints, one of them wearing a black, probably Augustinian, habit (cat. 9 b). None of the miniatures can be traced back prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Pope-Hennessy (1939, p. 180) first associated the Clark and Fitzwilliam cuttings on grounds of style, although he also grouped with them an unrelated miniature by a non-Sienese art-



ist influenced by Girolamo da Cremona (van Marle, 1927, IX, fig. 238).

In 1430, Martin V transported the relics of Saint Monica from Ostia to Rome, where they were deposited in the Augustinian church of San Trifone (the present Sant'Agostino). The events surrounding the identification of the relics at Ostia are recounted in a sermon composed that same year in Siena by the Augustinian monk and humanist Andrea Biglia, who describes the opening of the tomb and the veneration of the relics (for Biglia, see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 1968, X, pp. 413–15; for the sermon, long ascribed to Martin V, see AA.SS. Maii, i, pp. 494–96). Biglia died in Siena in 1435 and was buried in the church of Sant'Agostino. There can be little doubt that the depiction of Saint Monica in a sarcophagus, the front side of which has been removed, is in some sense related to Biglia's text and the identification of the saint's relics, and there is consequently good reason to believe that the choir books from which the three miniatures were excised were commissioned shortly after 1430 for Sant'Agostino in Siena.

The Fitzwilliam cutting was initially attributed by Berenson (1932, p. 245) to Giovanni di Paolo, but this was rejected by Pope-Hennessy (1937, p. 101, and 1939, p. 180), who pointed out its close relationship to works by Sassetta. His attribution of the Fitzwilliam and the Clark miniatures to the fictive pseudo-Pellegrino di Mariano is of considerable interest in that the key works in this group have since been shown to be by the Master of the Osservanza. An attribution of the Clark miniature to this anonymous master can hardly be doubted (see Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto 1984, p. 132; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 21, 35, n. 87). Although Avril (1983, p. 342) has argued that the Fitzwilliam scene is by Sassetta himself, this cannot be accepted. It is true that the quality is higher than that of the two companion cuttings, and that the distant hills bathed in a diaphanous light and the rippled surface of the green sea splashing against the hull of the ship recall the mystical expanse of water over which the figure of Saint Francis is borne in the central panel of the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece (Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence). However, the basically planar approach to composition (there is no clearly defined spatial relationship between the ship and the shore) and the brilliant color harmonies of pink, saffron yellow, vermilion, and blue are characteristic of the Master of the Osservanza and especially bear comparison with the *Saint Anthony at Mass* in Berlin (cat. 10 a). However, just as the Saint Anthony series reveals the participation of at least two hands (cat. 10 a–h), so also do these miniatures. The Clark and the Lehman cuttings are clearly by the same hand responsible for the majority of those scenes, while the Fitzwilliam miniature seems rather to be by a second artist deeply influ-

enced by Sassetta. It is worth noting that the Saint Anthony series, which is more or less contemporary with these miniatures, may also have been painted for a chapel in Sant'Agostino.

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9 b. The Initial G, with the Virgin and Saints (cutting from a Gradual)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on vellum. 17 × 14 cm. The miniature
has suffered from extensive flaking.

To the Virgin's left are shown Saint Paul and Saint Peter, while to her right is a young monk—probably an Augustinian—in a black habit. The initial has been described, understandably, as a *C* (de Ricci 1937, p. 1712, D. 17), but in view of the subject it is more likely the *G* of the Introit of the feast of All Saints: *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino*. On the verso is a fragmentary text: *m pretita p/ala pellite*.

The cutting, purchased in Paris in 1929, was discussed by Pope-Hennessy (1939, p. 180) together with a group of miniatures he ascribed to the pseudo-Pellegrino di Mariano. Among these were the *Baptism of Saint Augustine* in Lord Clark's collection, the Fitzwilliam cutting (cat. 9 a), and two unrelated Northern Italian miniatures. The cutting is certainly from the same set of choir books as the Clark and the Fitzwilliam miniatures, and may have been commissioned for the church of Sant'Agostino in Siena shortly after 1430. Laclotte (1957, p. 120) ascribed the miniature to Pellegrino di Mariano, but noted its relation to the work of Sassetta and of the Master of the Osservanza. It is to the last artist that the three illuminations may be confidently attributed. There are very close analogies to the Saint Anthony series (cat. 10 a–h): The Augustinian monk bears comparison with one of the beggars in the scene of *Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth* (cat. 10 b), while the Saint Paul may be compared to the *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman* (cat. 10 d).

Despite its damaged state, the miniature reveals the brilliant palette—dominated by yellow, blue, pink, and pale green—typical of the master, as well as his idiosyncratic sensitivity to surface pattern: The shape of the letter is echoed by the arch of the polychrome architecture (which should be compared to the ciborium in the Fitzwilliam cutting) and by the arc of saints.

KC



THE SAINT ANTHONY ABBOT SERIES (catalogue 10 a–h)

The series of eight panels illustrating the Life of Saint Anthony Abbot, included here in its entirety, constitutes one of the most engaging as well as enigmatic masterpieces of Sienese painting. No other fifteenth-century Sienese narrative cycle has engendered such a range of conflicting theories and views, due in part to the fact that virtually nothing is known about the history of the individual panels prior to 1859, when the two scenes now at Yale (cat. 10 d, e) were brought to the United States by J. J. Jarves following a twelve-year sojourn in Italy. There are no documents or early descriptions that can be associated with the series, whose arrangement, function, original destination, attribution, and dating remain problematic.

The series comprises six upright scenes of equal dimensions and two horizontal scenes tracing twelve episodes from Saint Anthony's life, from his childhood in Egypt to his death among his followers. The primary biographical source for the third-century hermit was written by his companion, Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius's account enjoyed a wide circulation in the Middle Ages, but the basis of the present series is likely to have been the *Vite dei santi padri* compiled by the fourteenth-century Pisan Dominican Domenico Cavalca. The subjects of the panels are as follows: (a) *Saint Anthony at Mass*; (b) *Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth*; (c) *Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit*; (d) *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman*; (e) *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils*; (f) *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold*; (g) *The Journey and Meeting of Saint Anthony with Saint Paul the Hermit*; (h) *The Funeral of Saint Anthony*. The eight scenes form an iconographically coherent symmetrical group, and their derivation from a single complex is not open to doubt, although initially it was thought that the two panels at Yale were connected with the *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* (cat. 1 f) from the predella of Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (Berenson 1903 b, p. 180; van Marle 1927, IX, pp. 318–20).

Waterhouse (1931, pp. 108–13) first proposed that the scenes, of which he knew seven, probably framed a painted image or statue of Saint Anthony, the six upright panels arranged in two vertical rows and possibly three horizontal scenes forming a predella. This proposal has been followed by most subsequent writers and is borne out by a number of technical features. For example, the fact that the six upright scenes are all painted on panels with a vertical grain excludes the possibility that they formed a conventional predella (as suggested by Scapecchi 1983, pp. 287–89). Moreover, one of the upright scenes (e) exhibits damage attributable to a candle burn (Seymour

1970, p. 212), suggestive of a low position in the altarpiece, while two others (c and g) have tooled gold backgrounds, indicative of a high placement. These two requirements can only be met by an arrangement of the panels in two vertical rows with the narrative reading from bottom to top. The position of the two horizontal scenes (d and h) is harder to resolve satisfactorily. Strict narrative sequence would place them at the top of each row (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 72, and 1987, p. 106). However, this was seldom the primary concern in fifteenth-century narrative cycles, and several factors suggest that, in fact, the two panels formed part of a predella. First, their dimensions (their width exceeds that of the upright pictures, while they are only about three quarters the height) would make placement at the top extremely awkward. Second, the tooling of the halos in the two horizontal scenes differs from that in the upright ones, again suggesting their isolation from the other panels. And third, the presence of the tooled gold background in two of the upright scenes would have no rationale if a scene with a naturalistic sky (d) were placed at the top. That one of the horizontal scenes (h) is painted on a panel with a vertical grain while the other (d) is painted on a composite panel of three pieces proves that they did not form part of a continuous horizontal plank, as is usual with scenes from a predella, and may have projected forward as framed elements with a larger, horizontal scene (of the death and burial of Saint Paul?) in the center.

Graziani (1948, p. 84) attempted to identify a fragmentary painting of Saint Anthony Abbot (in the Louvre) as the center panel of the reconstructed altarpiece, but this theory has been disproven (Lacotte 1978, p. 35). No less acceptable as a candidate is a full-length painting of Saint Anthony, in the collection of the Monte dei Paschi, Siena (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 369). Both of these works are lateral panels of polyptychs (see cat. 1). Nor can any surviving statue of Saint Anthony be associated with the altarpiece with any confidence. There are, indeed, no precise parallels in fifteenth-century Sienese painting for the type of ensemble that has been proposed, although altarpieces with a seated or standing saint flanked by narrative scenes from his life can be traced to the thirteenth century (especially pertinent are the *Saint Francis* altarpiece in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, by a follower of Guido da Siena, and the altarpiece of Saint Humilitas, in the Uffizi, Florence, possibly by Pietro Lorenzetti; see fig. 1).

The most conspicuous fifteenth-century Sienese altarpiece dedicated to Saint Anthony, in the church of Sant'Antonio Abate a Fontebranda, had the appearance of a conventional multistoried Gothic polyptych with a polychrome statue by Francesco da Valdambino at its center, painted lateral panels of saints, and a historiated predella by Martino di Bartolomeo (Neri Lusanna 1981,

pp. 330–31). Of interest, therefore, is a fourteenth-century frescoed altarpiece in the church of Sant'Agostino in Montalcino (south of Siena) showing a standing figure of Saint Anthony flanked by six rectangular narrative scenes with, below, a three-part predella of the Lamentation over the dead Christ in the center and two saints with a donor at the sides. Another pertinent analogy is a mutilated fifteenth-century fresco in the church of San Lorenzo at San Giovanni Valdarno (southeast of Florence), in which the saint is shown flanked by eight scenes of equal height, with two narrower scenes directly above (originally, there may have been additional scenes below the saint as well).¹

In view of the lack of local altarpieces analogous to the proposed configuration, the possibility that the scenes framed a processional banner rather than a painted or sculpted image is worth considering. It is known that a banner portraying Saint Bernardino (in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia) was framed by eight rectangular scenes of miracles performed by the saint (the banner was painted in 1464; the scenes are dated 1473), and it is conceivable that the present series derives from a similar ensemble. Regardless of whether the scenes framed a painted image, statue, or banner, they would have been considered subsidiary elements, and this may account for the lack of any mention of them in early sources or guidebooks.

The sole clue for identifying the original destination of the altarpiece is the presence of the arms of the Martinozzi family above the door of the palace in the second scene (Scapecchi 1983, p. 288). The Martinozzi were a prominent family in Siena, whose members frequently held governing posts and included several religious figures (the most important was the Franciscan the Blessed Giovanni Martinozzi, who was martyred in Egypt in 1342). Agnolo di Giovanni d'Agnolo Martinozzi served on the Supreme Magistracy in 1393, was knighted in 1395, and attended the investiture of Gian Galeazzo Visconti as duke of Milan. His son, Niccolò, who married a member of the Salimbeni family in 1428, was awarded the title of Conte del Castelluccio in Abruzzo by Queen Joan II of Naples in 1430. Niccolò's family chapel in the church of San Francesco was decorated between 1445 and 1448 by Vecchietta (cat. 44; see de Nicola 1910, pp. 74–77), but there may have been another Martinozzi chapel in the church of Sant'Agostino, although the evidence is far from clear (see Butzek 1985, p. 218; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 27, 36, notes 111–114). Dedicated to Saint Anthony Abbot, the Sant'Agostino chapel was endowed in 1427 by a certain Antonio di Matteo, and sometime thereafter an altarpiece was installed that bore coats of arms identified in later sources as probably those of the Martinozzi (Butzek 1985, p. 218, n. 78). The altarpiece was transferred to another chapel belonging to the

Azzoni family between 1592 and 1598 (A.S.S., Conventi 1088, ff. 40 r–41 v; Butzek 1985, p. 195), but earlier, in 1575, it was described in terms that suggest a traditional polyptych rather than the sort of altarpiece to which the Saint Anthony series seems to have belonged (see Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 27). The evidence is, therefore, not encouraging. Scapecchi (1983, pp. 288–89; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 36, n. 118) has argued that the series was, instead, commissioned by the Martinozzi for a non-Sienese church, possibly in the Marches. This is inherently unlikely.

The salient feature of the Saint Anthony series is the emphasis on highly detailed—and, in at least one case, identifiable—settings. In the first scene, the infant saint prays before the high altar of the cathedral of Siena, plausibly depicted (although understandably simplified) as though viewed from one of the patronal chapels, with the large circular window visible in the apse. The saint is shown a second time listening to Mass in the patronal chapel of Sant'Ansano—deprived, however, of its altarpiece. The second scene shows the saint distributing his wealth in front of a Sienese Gothic palace. In the third scene, the saint, now clad in a habit, receives the blessing of an old monk standing in front of a chapel that has the appearance of an updated rendition of the celebrated Augustinian hermitage of San Leonardo al Lago, and in the concluding scene, Saint Anthony's bier is set in a striped barn-like nave typical of the major conventual churches of the city. These quasi-topographical settings have few parallels in Sienese painting. The church interiors in the predella of Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece are, by comparison, evocative distillations of building types. Even the various surviving predella panels by the Master of the *Osservanza* offer no parallels for the precise, descriptive character of these scenes. In the first half of the century, only the two panels painted by Sano di Pietro representing Saint Bernardino preaching before the Palazzo Pubblico and in front of the church of San Francesco, and Domenico di Bartolo's frescoes in the Spedale della Scala offer analogies, but those works were conceived as documentary portrayals of recent events rather than illustrations of a canonical legend. What, in effect, the master of these eight, highly original scenes has done is to transpose the life of a third-century hermit into contemporary terms of an unusually specific kind, employing the allusive, homiletic technique of a preacher familiar with the day-to-day life of his audience: Saint Anthony's life has been made into an exemplum. It need hardly be said that these specifiable settings would have been lost on a non-Sienese viewer. Nor can they be accounted for by any literary source. Rather, the narrative technique employed must stem from the commission itself: from the Martinozzi, who alone can have instructed that their family coat of arms be shown above



Figure 1. Follower of Guido da Siena. *Saint Francis, with Scenes from His Life*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

the door of Saint Anthony's palace, and from the members of the confraternity or church in which the altarpiece was placed.

It is worth noting that several features of the paintings suggest that the altarpiece may have been intended for an Augustinian foundation. In the third scene (c), the younger monk standing in the doorway behind the old man wears a black habit appropriate to an Augustinian friar. The same is true of a number of the monks who surround Saint Anthony's bier in the last scene. Augustine had been deeply moved by Athanasius's account of the Life of Saint Anthony (see the *Confessions*, VIII, vi),

and the Hermits of Saint Augustine held Saint Anthony in special veneration. For this reason, the choice of episodes illustrated in the series, with the emphasis on the repudiation of wealth and the adoption of a life of retreat, is of particular interest, as is the balance between scenes with urban and landscape settings. Poverty, and a synthesis of the active and contemplative life were very much themes of the Augustinian reform, or Observant, movement. It is perhaps not fortuitous that the most compelling precedent for the anecdotal approach to narration is to be found in Simone Martini's altarpiece of the Blessed Agostino Novello, which has been shown to reflect these currents of Augustinian thought (Seidel 1985, pp. 56–61). It was also for an Augustinian foundation that the Master of the Osservanza seems, more or less contemporaneously, to have illuminated a set of choir books (cat. 10).

No less problematic than the arrangement, function, and destination of the series is its authorship. An initial attribution to Sassetta was questioned by Longhi (1940, pp. 188–89, n. 26), who suggested that the relationship of style was rather with the works he ascribed to an independent Master of the Osservanza altarpiece. This suggestion was taken up and developed in a study of the master by Graziani (lecture of 1942; 1948, pp. 83–84). From the outset, however, the superior quality of the series, as compared to the other works of the Osservanza group, was recognized, either tacitly or explicitly, and two critics (Berenson 1946, p. 52; Pope-Hennessy 1947, pp. 11–12, 25) maintained an attribution to Sassetta himself. Brandi (1949, pp. 69–87) on the other hand, accepted the integrity of Longhi's and Graziani's group, but identified the artist as the young Sano di Pietro; this idea has had a number of adherents. The next significant contribution toward an understanding of the series and the problems posed by its authorship was the demonstration by Seymour (1952–53, pp. 37–45, 97) that each of the two scenes at Yale (d and e) was painted by a different hand, and that the altarpiece was the product of a collaboration. This line of reasoning was applied to the entire series by Pope-Hennessy (1956, pp. 365–70), who distinguished the painter of scenes a, d, f, and g (identified by him as Sassetta) from the assistant responsible for scenes c and e; as for scenes b and h, he hypothesized that the settings alone were designed by the superior of the two artists.

Collaboration between artists—even major artists with their own workshops—was far from unusual in Siena (see pp. 30–31), and is most certainly a factor in this series, which exhibits differences in quality and even of style (Carli 1957, pp. 108, 114–18, 121–22, note; Shapley 1966, pp. 141–42, and 1979, pp. 319–23; Oertel 1975, p. 389; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 28). However, the degree to which it is possible to draw a sharp division between

the artists involved is another matter (see individual entries). Insofar as the narrative style of the series is, in a real sense, due to a single mind, such a division is, perhaps, not historically valid. It is indicative of the nature of the problem that in a reassessment of the series, Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 108) has proposed a new division (he assigns scenes c, d, and h to the Master of the Osservanza and scenes a, b, e, f, and g to a close associate of Sassetta). The exhibition of all eight scenes together will provide the first and almost certainly the only opportunity to make direct comparisons. Under these circumstances it may be useful to attempt to characterize the salient traits of the two stylistic poles evident in the series rather than to argue a rigid division of authorship.

The first style is most readily defined by the two horizontal scenes, in which a richer, more brilliant palette is employed, and there is a greater concern for light and volume, both in the treatment of the rounded masses of the hills and in the description of the figures. In the two upright scenes at the top of each row (b, c, and f, g), by contrast, the figures and landscape forms are conceived more in terms of silhouette than of mass. Color is, on the whole, somewhat paler and less highly contrasted, and it is employed to achieve a decorative unity. This is especially true in the landscapes, where the hills are painted with different hues. The figures, described with great delicacy, sometimes appear flattened—an effect accentuated by the frequent use of a dark penumbra that, in the scene of *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold* (cat. 10 f), runs indiscriminately over the background forms and is used to set off the figure. These qualities greatly enhance the surreal, magical beauty of the best of the scenes. It is this style that corresponds most closely to the other works in the Osservanza group, and it is this artist who must have conceived the series.

It would, however, be an injustice to treat the differences of style as though they indicated a hierarchy of quality. In some respects, the two horizontal scenes are more progressive, announcing some of the concerns later taken up by Sano di Pietro in his predella (now in the Louvre) for the Gesuati altarpiece of 1444. Even in the scene of *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* (cat. 10 e), in which the pictorial technique has a certain crudeness and the monastic buildings are awkwardly conceived, there is a compensating mastery in the active poses of the figures. In a very real sense, the series benefits from the varying interests of the artists who collaborated on its production. The possibility that in some of the scenes the architecture may have been laid in by one artist and, quite literally, populated by another (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 366) underscores the degree to which divergences of style not only coexist but interpenetrate.

It should be emphasized that these same distinctions characterize almost the entire group of works currently

ascribed to the Master of the Osservanza. Even in the Osservanza triptych there are clear differences between the more volumetric figure of Saint Ambrose, and the finely drawn, softly modeled Saint Jerome. Similar distinctions pertain to the Passion predella (cat. 12 a–d). Perhaps most illuminating are four small portable triptychs in the Pinacoteca Nazionale and the Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena; the Museo della Cattedrale, Pienza; and the Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreenianum, The Hague. The triptychs are related in their carpentry, general conception, and, more importantly, in their style: All have at one time or another been attributed to the Master of the Osservanza. Yet, only the two triptychs in Siena can conceivably have been painted by the same artist, and even they show differences of style (the Pienza triptych is, as Carli 1957, p. 122, recognized, by a distinct hand responsible for a triptych with the *Adoration*, in the El Paso Museum of Art, and a predella with scenes from the Life of the Virgin, in the Vatican). As Angelini (1986, p. 46) has noted, the probability is that we are dealing not with a workshop in the traditional sense, but with a *compagnia*, or joint workshop, of two or more artists sharing materials, ideas, and commissions.

Angelini has raised the possibility that Sassetta himself may have been involved in this *compagnia*, together with Sano di Pietro and the Master of the Osservanza. Sassetta's influence is unquestionably the key factor in the Saint Anthony series. The overlapping hills of the landscapes, with their highlighted, faceted edges; the poetic use of barren branches to mark off the space (a feature perhaps inspired by Franco-Flemish miniatures: see cat. 10 f); and the pose of a figure like the devil in the Yale scene (d) all derive from Sassetta's *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. 2 b), or from a work very much like it. Although the Saint Anthony series has been dated variously (most recently, to the 1450s: Alessi and Scapecechi 1985, pp. 26–27), it can scarcely be much later in date than the *Adoration of the Magi* and must, in consequence, have been painted in the mid-1430s (Graziani 1948, p. 83; Carli 1957, pp. 118–21; Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 109). Whether or not the Master of the Osservanza can be identified with Vico di Luca (see biography) is less important than the recognition of the cultural and artistic complexities that lie behind this extraordinary ensemble.

KC

1. The fresco at San Giovanni Valdarno, which is by Giovanni di Ser Giovanni, known as Scheggia, was incorrectly described by Pope-Hennessy (1939, p. 72, and 1987, p. 106) as composed of two vertical rows of scenes, each crowned by a wider, horizontal scene, providing an analogy for the similar placement of the two horizontal scenes at the summit of the present series. A Florentine engraving of Saint Anthony surrounded by scenes from his life (Hind 1938, I, p. 51, pl. 64) is also pertinent.

10 a. Saint Anthony at Mass

Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz,
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. 46 × 32.5 cm. The panel has a vertical grain. The paint surface is intact: In addition to a raised, or lipped, edge on all sides, there are traces of gilding. There is no sign of damage from a candle burn (as reported by Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 106). The picture was cleaned in 1981.

According to Saint Athanasius, Saint Anthony's piety was evident from an early age. As summarized in Cavalca's *Vite dei santi padri* (chapter I), the popular, fourteenth-century adaptation of Athanasius's text: "And whether at home or at church with his father and mother, [Anthony] practiced prayer and thanked God with a full heart and love." This is the subject of the background scene, where the infant saint is shown kneeling devoutly before the high altar of a Gothic church. In the foreground, the saint is shown a second time, at the age of eighteen or twenty, six months after the death of his parents, attending Mass during the reading of the Gospel, Matthew 19:21: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." "Hearing these words as if said by God, not by a man, and imagining that God addressed them for and to him, [Anthony] took this commandment to heart . . ." (Cavalca, chapter I).

The similarity of the church to Siena Cathedral has been frequently noted (Schottmüller 1910, p. 147; Waterhouse 1931, p. 108; Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 73; Brandi 1949, p. 83; Carli 1957, p. 104), but only recently has the unusual accuracy of the view been established (van der Ploeg 1984, p. 147). The saint stands in the chapel of Saint Ansanus, to the left of the high altar. Beyond is the choir and the enormous circular window of the apse. In the fifteenth century, the chapel of Saint Ansanus must have been one of the most venerated in the city. It contained Simone Martini's famous image of the *Annunciation* (now in the Uffizi, Florence), to which Saint Bernardino alluded in one of his sermons in terms that imply his audience's familiarity with it. The striped piers, with their foliated capitals and elongated impost blocks, the three steps separating the choir from the nave, the massive cornice in the apse, and the post-1375 position of the high altar, which was occupied by Duccio's *Maestà*, are described simply but effectively.

A topographical view of this sort employed as the setting for a religious narrative is highly unusual in Italian painting at this date: Perhaps the closest parallel is Francesco d'Antonio's *Christ Healing the Lunatic Boy* in the John G. Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which offers a somewhat fanciful view of the interior of Florence Cathedral (Shell 1965, pp. 465–69). Not

until 1483 was the cathedral of Siena depicted with greater accuracy and boldness, but then it was as the setting for a contemporary event, on a *biccherna* cover by, it would seem, a master of perspective, Pietro Orioli. In the scene of *Saint Anthony at Mass*, it appears that the artist began by laying in a perspectival scaffolding according to an approximative, single-point system current in Tuscany by the mid-1430s—one adopted by Sassetta in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow* of 1430–32. Examination of the picture under infrared light shows that the squares of the pavement were originally laid in so that they receded to a vanishing area in the left shoulder of the priest. The transversals were determined from a point along the right edge of the panel at the height of the fourth black stripe of the pier. However, this scaffolding was used only as a general guide in painting the scene, and neither the pattern of the pavement nor the various architectural details conforms to it. The result is a disparity between the ambition of the perspective structure and the results achieved. In the end, the Master of the Osservanza creates an impression of space not by the rigorous application of a theory of vision, but by the accumulation of acutely observed details, and he notably avoids the audacious vistas of Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (cat. 1 a–f). Nonetheless, it is questionable whether the stillness of the vast, vaulted spaces of a Gothic cathedral, broken by the voice of a lone priest chanting Mass in a side chapel and by the muffled sound of stockinged feet approaching the altar, has ever been more compellingly evoked.

A number of significant changes in the composition are documented by incisions in the gesso preparation. The chapel was to have been framed by an arched entrance similar to that in the Fitzwilliam miniature (cat. 9 a), while the altar was to be adorned with a Gothic polypych (of the *Annunciation*?). In both cases a more simple solution was adopted whereby key motifs gain through isolation: The stained-glass window's delicate patterns of glazed silver are played against the barren wall, and the head of the priest is viewed in lost profile against the gilt altar cross. The effect of these details is to suggest an experience recollected with a clarity of vision, and refined by an essentially unreal and exquisite use of color.

The picture was considered the work of Benozzo Gozzoli when it was in the collection of Sir Coutts Lindsay in England. It was identified by Langton Douglas as a scene by Sassetta from the Life of Saint Francis, and sold to Berlin in 1910 (Schottmüller 1910, p. 148). The subject was properly identified by Waterhouse (1931, p. 108), who also related it to the other panels in the series.

KC





10 b. Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 47.1 × 34.6 cm. (with added strips); painted surface 46 × 33.6 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1.2 cm. There are remnants of a lipped edge on all sides.

According to Athanasius (chapter I), after hearing the Gospel read at Mass, Anthony returned home, turned over his land to the people of his village, sold his possessions, and distributed the proceeds among the poor, reserving a small portion for his sister. This he also gave away after hearing the Gospel commandment, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (Matthew 6:34). Cavalca compresses the account to emphasize the quickness of the saint's action. In the present picture, Saint Anthony is seen descending the stairs of his family palace holding a sack of money. He appears a second time in the foreground dispensing his wealth to a family of beggars; a shoeless man and two blind beggars are shown behind them. The palace, with its ground floor given over to storage and marketing (indicated by the wooden table set up in front) and its upper floor pierced with biforate windows, is typical of Sienese Gothic architecture. The Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo (formerly the Palazzo Grottanelli) offers a close comparison. Since the Martinozzi coat of arms is shown above the doorway (Scapecchi 1983, p. 288), the palace may have been intended as a representation of the Martinozzi family residence, which, according to Pecci (1752, p. 62), was in the Piazza del Campo adjacent to the vicolo San Pietro. The building has also been identified as that part of the Spedale della Scala where alms were distributed (Gallavotti Cavallero 1987, p. 64).

As in the companion scenes, the principal architectural features have been incised into the gesso preparation. Perspective, however, plays a peripheral role, and an impression of space is created chiefly by the series of walls with open doors and windows set one behind the other like stage flats. This was perhaps inspired by Donatello's bronze relief of *The Banquet of Herod* for the Baptistery font. The picture, with the ostensible fidelity of its setting and the attention lavished on such details as the wrought-iron fixtures of the palace, the pile of grain visible through the door of the inner room, the barrel of water beneath the passage or corridor at the left, and the tattered, patched garments of the beggars, gives the impression of religious narrative interpreted as genre. This effect is enhanced by the lack of dramatic focus. Viewed for the most part in profile, the figures, with impassive expressions, move along parallel paths, and even Saint Anthony seems motivated by benignity rather than spiritual resolve. A comparison with Masaccio's fresco of *Saint*

Peter Distributing the Goods of the Church in the Brancacci Chapel, Florence, is both inevitable and revealing in this respect. Perkins (1907, pp. 45–46), who identified the scene as an event from the Life of Saint Martin, associated the panel with Sassetta's *Saint Martin and the Beggar* in the Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena—a fragment from a documented crucifix of 1433—but the two works are only superficially similar. Sassetta's interest lay in the expressive potential of the act of charity, and he used gesture and stance to heighten the sense of drama and to define the spatial ambient. The Master of the Osservanza seems, instead, to have aligned himself with the aristocratic vision of Simone Martini, whose altarpiece of the Blessed Agostino Novello may have provided him with a point of inspiration; the Osservanza Master appears at once more archaic and more modern than Sassetta, who was attuned to the fundamental novelties of Florentine art.

The picture, together with catalogue 10 c, was first recorded in 1870, in the collection of Count Augusto Cacialupi in Macerata, as a work by Masaccio or Masolino (Shapley 1979, p. 320; Scapecchi 1983, p. 290, n. 20). The provenance of the two pictures suggested to Scapecchi (1983, p. 288) that the series had been painted for a church in the Marches, but this cannot be demonstrated and is inherently unlikely. Waterhouse (1931, p. 108) first associated the scene with the Saint Anthony series.

KC

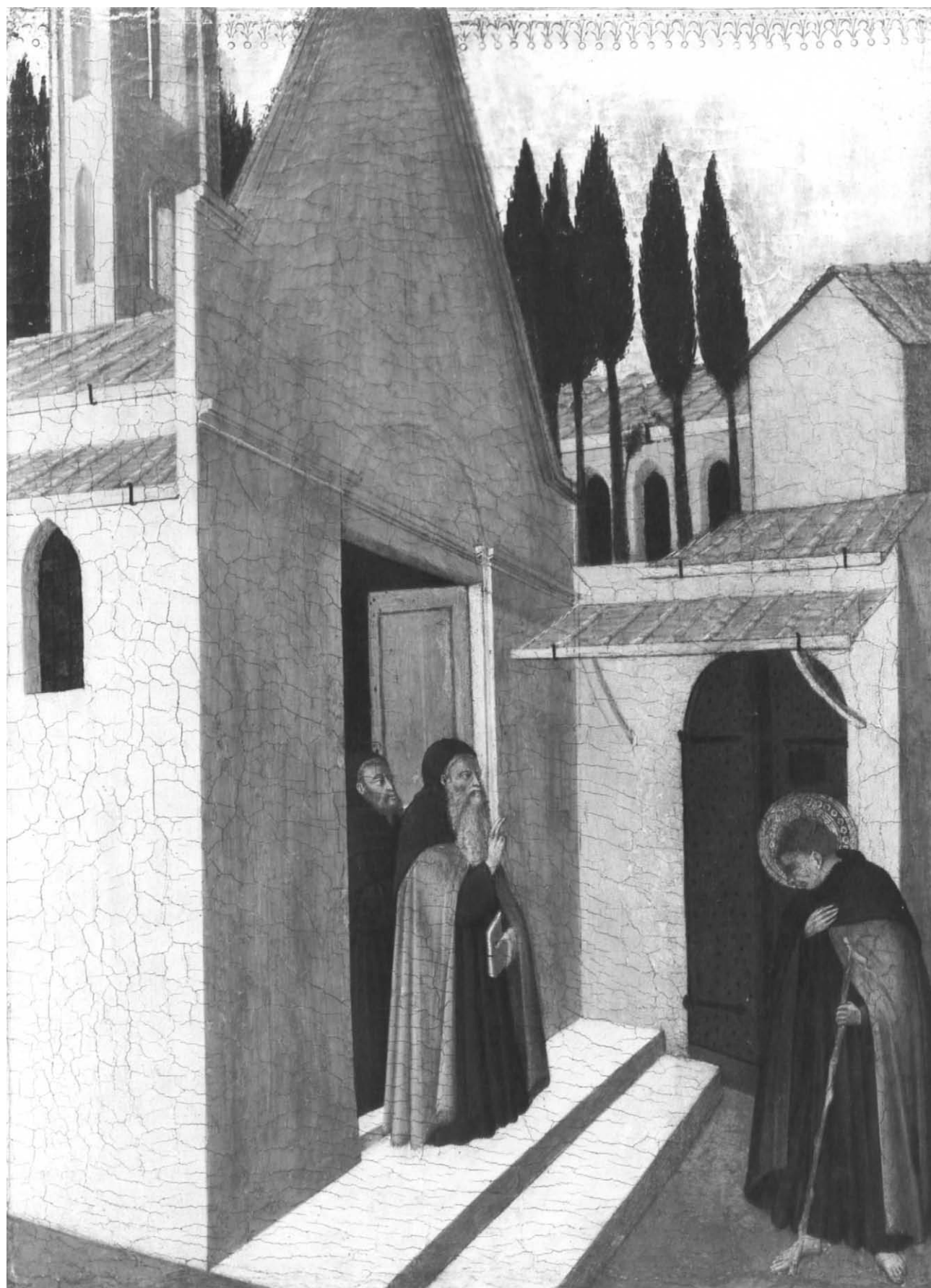
10 c. Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. 47.2 × 35 cm. (with added strips); painted surface 46.3 × 33.1 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1.3 cm. and cradled. The original, lipped edge is intact on the vertical sides; there are traces of it and of gold along the bottom. The gold background and tooling along the upper border are modern.

Following the distribution of his family fortune, Anthony is said by Athanasius to have left the city and found an old hermit ("un santo e antico eremito": Cavalca, chapter I) as well as other monks living in the neighborhood whose lives he emulated. During this time he underwent a number of temptations by the Devil that established his reputation among the inhabitants. Then, at the age of about thirty-five, he decided upon a solitary life in the desert. He returned to the old hermit, beseeching the monk to join him. They prayed together, and Anthony departed alone. It is the departure that this scene—sadly

Master of the
Osservanza



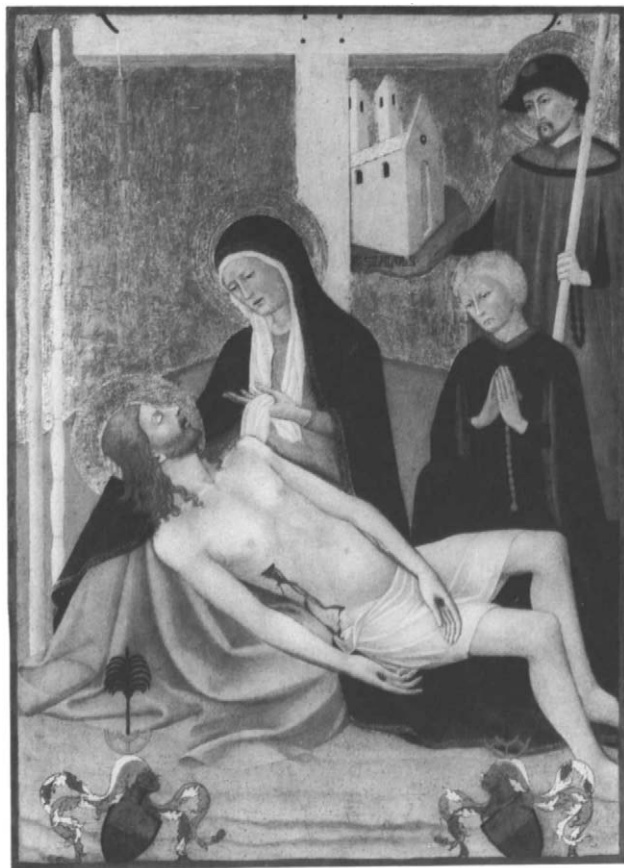


Figure 1. Master of the Osservanza. *Pietà*. Monte dei Paschi, Siena

blemished by a large vertical damage that extends through the face of the saint and the door and overhang behind him—is generally thought to portray (Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 74, 93, n. 47; Kaftal 1952, col. 68, no. 5). However, as Anthony is shown beardless, and certainly younger than in the scenes of his temptation that precede the account of his departure (cat. 10 d–e), the interpretation of the episode is not completely clear. Here, as throughout the series, the intent seems to have been to evoke the stages of Saint Anthony's spiritual development rather than to merely illustrate a particular event in Athanasius's narrative. It is in this sense that the details of the scene are particularly noteworthy.

The still youthful Anthony, holding his emblematic tau-shaped staff, appears outside a monastic settlement from which an old monk holding a book emerges with a younger companion in a black habit. Beyond the enclosing wall the arcade and cypress trees of a cloister are visible. None of these very specific details relates to the narrative of Athanasius or Cavalca, and they can only be explained by the manifest intention to endow the series with a contemporary relevance. The monastery looks very much like an updated rendition of the fourteenth-century Augustinian hermitage of San Leonardo al Lago,

just west of Siena. It shares with the building not only its general architectural features, but its layout. Initially, the resemblance was even closer, for incised lines reveal that the church façade was to be decorated with a large circular window, while an underdrawing describes an arched tympanum above the door, as at San Leonardo. Whether or not a direct allusion was intended is not certain, but it would be perfectly in keeping with the Master of the Osservanza's approach to narration to associate Anthony's adoption of an ascetic life with one of the most celebrated Siennese hermitages. The monk who wears a habit like that of an Augustinian cannot but recall the fact that the Antonines actually follow the Augustinian rule.

The architectural setting has been criticized for its structural incoherence (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 366). The background buildings do have an improvised appearance, but the oblique view of the church, for which Carli (1957, pp. 121–22) found parallels in fourteenth-century paintings, was carefully projected from a point along the right edge of the picture about two-fifths the distance from the bottom. The remaining buildings were laid in approximatively. This combination of a rational and empirical approach to space is typical of the Master of the Osservanza. A similar, but more primitive, structure is held by Saint Sebaldu in the Master of the Osservanza's *Pietà* in the Monte dei Paschi, Siena (see fig. 1). That work, certainly datable to 1432–33, provides a firm reference point for the dating of the Saint Anthony series, which must have been painted a few years later.

The picture has the same history as catalogue 10 b.

KC

10 d. Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

Tempera and gold on wood. Painted surface 37.9 × 40.2 cm. The support, which has added strips, is 1.35 cm. thick and has been cradled. It is composed of three panels: a horizontally grained panel at the top, and two vertically grained panels. The paint edges are original and retain traces of gold. A major loss about 5 cm. wide in the trees and sky over the joint between the upper and lower panels was uncovered during restoration in 1950–52 (Seymour 1952–53, p. 37).

Scarcely had Anthony decided upon a life of abstinence and discipline in a cell ("abitacolo": Cavalca, chapter I) than he was beset with temptations—particularly, of the flesh. It was at this time—prior to his departure for the desert—that the Devil appeared to him as a woman ("Io



10 d

nimico gli faceva apparire di notte forme di bellissime femmine e impudiche") to tempt him, but the saint resisted these advances. The subject, although a popular one, was not mentioned by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*. In the Yale panel the saint encounters the winged but rather modestly attired seductress while returning along a pebbled path to his cell in the wilderness. Due to the large loss along the horizon, it is not possible to say with certainty whether a specific time of day was intended, but the colored undersides of the clouds suggest evening.

The picture has long been admired—not least by Jarves (1861, pp. 239–40), who acquired it as a work by Sassetta prior to 1859—for its poetic treatment of the subject. The attribution to Sassetta is of considerable interest in that the artist was scarcely more than a historical curiosity at the time. Jarves distinguished between the authorship of this panel and its companion at Yale (cat. 10 e). The validity of this distinction was demonstrated by Seymour (1952–53, pp. 37–47), and the panel was among the scenes from the Saint Anthony series that Pope-Hennessy (1956, p. 366) retained as by Sassetta (see the introductory entry for a discussion of this matter), noting the affinity between the Devil and the young king in the Chigi-Saracini *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. 2 b). The relationship between the Yale *Temptation* and Sassetta's *Journey* and *Adoration of the Magi* is, indeed, close. As in the works by Sassetta, so in the Yale *Temptation* the figures are treated in terms of volume, although their features are described more schematically, boldly illuminated in broad patches, and as in the *Journey* and *Adoration of the Magi*, the landscape is made up of rounded hills punctuated at regular intervals by the gnarled trunks of diminutive trees and traversed by a pebbled path that describes a continuous curve from the background to the foreground. In both these respects the *Temptation* differs markedly from either the *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* (cat. 10 e), with its coarser technique, or the *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold* (cat. 10 f), in which the forms are flatter and the landscape composed in a more piecemeal way. However, the comparison with Sassetta's work also reveals differences of facture—precise but impressionistic in the *Journey* and *Adoration of the Magi*; broad but more regular in the *Temptation*—and of palette. The *Temptation* was probably painted by an independent—and quite possibly younger—associate of the Master of the Osservanza attuned to Sassetta's innovations.

It would, however, be wrong to overemphasize the variations between the *Temptation* and its companion scenes, for some of its basic features clearly reflect the concerns of the Master of the Osservanza, who was in a general sense responsible for its design. The small cell, a cubic mass of pure color, seems to have been projected according to the same system employed in the three preceding episodes (the vanishing area is in the head of the

saint). The sky, with its brightly lit horizon, clouds tinged with color, and birds that seem to hang in midair as though suspended by invisible wires, is one of the memorable features of the Master of the Osservanza's landscapes. Sassetta, possibly influenced by Gentile da Fabriano (for example, by the *Saint Nicholas Saves a Ship in Distress* in the Vatican), first conceived of depicting the sky as an arc or as the interior surface of a dome, as it were—streaked by clouds, and accented by a covey of swallows whose erratic flight measures its span—in the predella of the *Madonna of the Snow* of 1430–32. This intensely naturalistic approach to landscape painting was adopted by the Master of the Osservanza and his associates for its poetic rather than its descriptive value, and in the hands of Sano di Pietro (who must have worked with the Master of the Osservanza) it became scarcely more than a convention. Interestingly, the geometric landscapes, diaphanous skies, and patterned formation of birds that dominate Sassetta's production from about 1435 on seem to have had no effect on the Saint Anthony series, suggesting that it was painted before 1440. It is when compared with Sassetta's achievement (see cat. 1 f) that the settings of this series seem closer to the more exquisite and refined world of Franco-Flemish miniature painting.

As in the other scenes, the main lines of the architecture were incised into the ground. The door was intended to be arched, with a projecting overhang. The preliminary drawing for the Devil is partly visible through her pink dress.

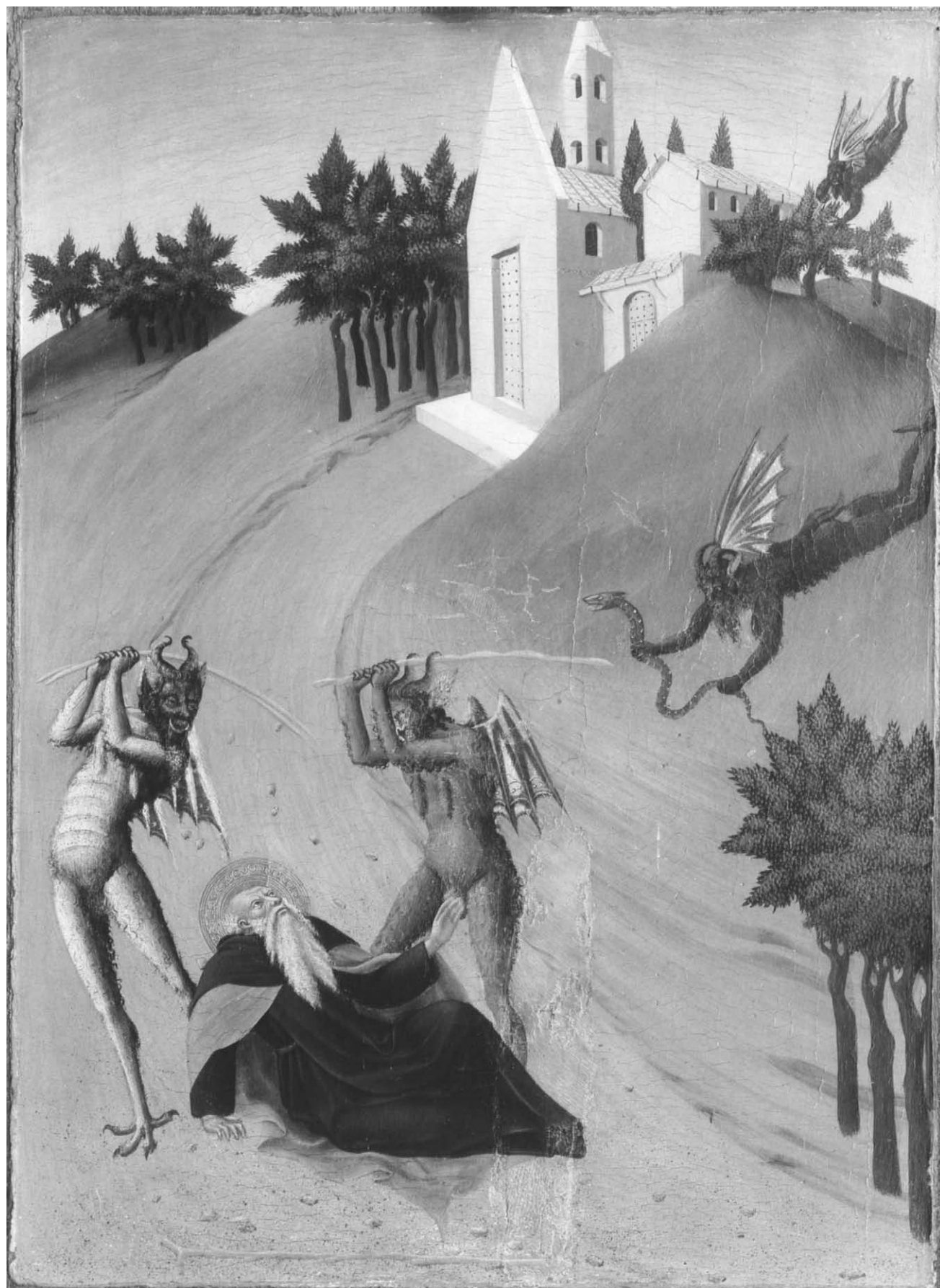
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10 e. Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

Tempera and gold on wood. Painted surface 47.6 × 34.3 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, is thinned to 1.35 cm. and cradled. There are traces of the original, lipped edge and of gold on all sides. A large damage, evidently from a candle burn, mars the lower legs of Saint Anthony and the left leg of the devil at the right. The 1950–52 cleaning of the picture is described by Seymour (1952–53, pp. 36–38).

Long after he had established a reputation for saintly asceticism, Anthony told his followers how he had frequently been tempted by the Devil, who showed him masses of gold, and beaten by demons (Cavalca, chapter IX). These are the subjects of two consecutive scenes in the Saint Anthony series. However, the precise event shown in the Yale panel can be identified with an incident that took place prior to Anthony's definitive departure for the desert, when he was thirty-five, and is recounted immediately



after the temptations of the flesh that are the subject of the preceding scene (cat. 10 d). On the example of Elijah, Anthony resolved to leave the cell where he had been living and to go into the desert a distance from the monastery of the old hermit, where there were some ancient tombs. Here he had himself shut up. One night the Devil came with a host of demons and beat him severely. He was found by a companion, who brought him back to the monastery (Cavalca, chapter III).

Although the Yale panel omits any reference to the tombs, the buildings on the hill in the background are obviously intended to represent the monastery that appears in the scene of *Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit* (cat. 10 c). Its various elements have, however, been somewhat rearranged and simplified. Two of the demons beat the prostrate saint, who raises a hand protectively while he casts one demon a reproachful glance, and two other devils—one holding a spotted serpent—fly through the air. In Sassetta's representation of the event (cat. 1 f), from the Arte della Lana altarpiece, a devil beats Anthony with two snakes. Initially, the plan was to include another demon in the sky at the left, but it was painted out (Seymour 1952–53, p. 37).

The picture was acquired by Jarves together with the scene of *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil* (cat. 10 d) prior to 1859, but unlike its companion it was ascribed by him to an unknown Siennese artist rather than to Sassetta (Sturgis 1868, pp. 53–55). This attribution implies a qualitative judgment as well. Although, following the attribution of both panels to Sassetta by Berenson (1903 b, p. 180), they have generally been accepted as by the same artist, Seymour (1952–53, pp. 37–47) made a compelling case for isolating the master responsible for the scene of Saint Anthony being beaten. Carli (1957, pp. 121–22) later tentatively suggested that, along with the *Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit* (cat. 10 c), it was possibly painted by the young Sano di Pietro working as an associate of the Master of the Osservanza. This tantalizing hypothesis remains conjectural (see also Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 369, and 1987, p. 108).

The style of the *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* diverges significantly from that of the other scenes in the series. This is not simply a matter of a more summarial, somewhat coarser technique. Throughout the series action is underplayed and an attempt is made to re-create the interior life of Saint Anthony in the stillness of the imagination. In the Yale panel, by contrast, the subject is envisaged primarily in terms of physical action, with little attempt to portray the spiritual dilemma that the beating signifies. The dynamic, horizontal pose of the saint is parallel to his discarded staff and the bottom edge of the picture, and the action of each assailant is analyzed with a straightforward view toward plausibility. The precipitous landscape, with its simple progression of differ-

ently colored hills separated by dense clusters of trees, is but a neutral foil, and the buildings have the character of a perfunctory reference to place. One senses an ambitious but essentially prosaic mind at work. This emerges quite clearly if the scene is compared to Sassetta's panel from the Arte della Lana altarpiece (cat. 1 f), on which it must, to a degree, depend. There is a suggestive affinity to the *Flagellation of Saint Jerome* in the Louvre, from the predella of Sano di Pietro's altarpiece of 1444, and this affinity provides the strongest evidence against the identification of Sano di Pietro with the principal master of the series, the Master of the Osservanza (Brandi 1949, pp. 69–87).

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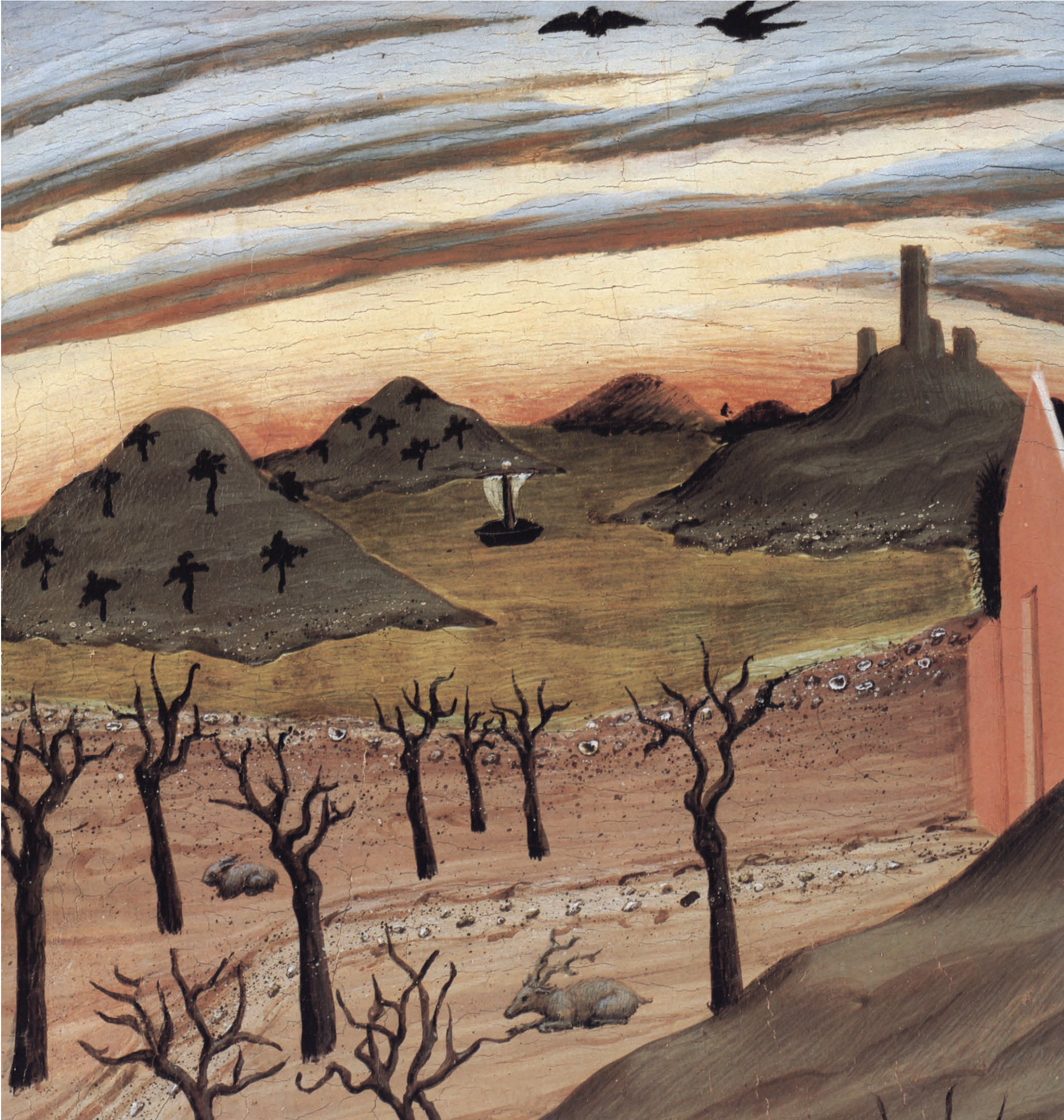
10 f. Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 47.8 × 34.5 cm.; painted surface 46.8 × 33.6 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has not been thinned or cradled and is 3.5 cm. thick. The back is inscribed with the name Sano di Pietro. A repainted triangular area to the right of the rabbit at one time contained the gilded heap of gold.

At the age of thirty-five, Saint Anthony decided upon a solitary existence in the desert. After taking leave of the old hermit he had befriended earlier, he left for the desert alone, and was soon tempted by the Devil with a silver plate in his path. Scarcely had he overcome this temptation than a heap of gold appeared, "from which Anthony, marveling, ran as if fleeing from a fire" (Cavalca, chapter IV). In the Lehman panel, which was first published by Suida (1911, pl. LVIII: as Siennese, late fourteenth century) when in the collection of Prince Ouroussoff in Vienna, and attributed to Sassetta by Mary Berenson (1911, p. 202), the saint is shown in a barren landscape inhabited by deer and rabbits, his hands raised in astonishment at a heap of gold originally shown beside the path (the area has been repainted). In the background is a coral-colored building possibly intended as the cell shown in catalogue 10 d (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 75).

The picture has long been recognized as one of the finest in the series, particularly for its evocative landscape, which has been compared to the barren area known as Le Crete southeast of Siena, or to the region around Lecceto and San Leonardo al Lago (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 369; Carli 1957, p. 120). Given the resemblance of the monastery in the scene of *Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit* (cat. 10 c) to the buildings of San Leonardo, this association of the Egyptian desert with the Siennese





countryside must be intentional. However, in contrast to the generically similar but more three-dimensional landscape of *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman* (cat. 10 d), and the uninspired landscape of *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* (cat. 10 e), here the barren hills and twisted tree trunks are transformed into symbolic features of a visionary landscape with only a tangential relation to reality. Instead of describing a spatial continuum, the pebble-strewn path connects a series of otherwise disconnected and coloristically distinct areas onto which have been applied the frozen images of animals and the flattened forms of menacing trees. The lack of interaction among the animals is paralleled in the *Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth* (cat. 10 b), and it is typical of the Master of the Osservanza that, rather than showing Saint Anthony “as if fleeing from a fire”—as had the follower of Fra Angelico who painted the predella panel now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston—he has suspended the action of the saint. The sky, too, with its wonderfully colored horizon and jostling bands of clouds, is inherently unreal: The gilded light of sunset gleaming behind the clouds at the right must, originally, have functioned as a symbolic counterpart to the heap of gold at which Saint Anthony stares in awed fascination.

It is this scene that most insistently poses the question of whether the Master of the Osservanza was familiar with Franco-Flemish miniatures from the circle of the Limbourg brothers or Jacquemart de Hesdin (Berenson 1930, p. 119, n., and 1936, p. 439; Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 83–84, 1956, p. 366, and 1987, p. 109). The evidence for this is inconclusive, and the idea has been contested (Brandt 1949, pp. 56–57, 82–85; Carli 1957, pp. 42–44, 120). The Limbourgs and Jacquemart de Hesdin visited Siena, but there is no evidence that the requisite miniatures were available to Sienese artists (Carli 1957, p. 44; Meiss 1974, pp. 245–46). There is also the fact that the landscape style of these Franco-Flemish miniatures stems from fourteenth-century Sienese models (Meiss 1967, pp. 218–20, and 1974, p. 241). The predella of Pietro Lorenzetti’s *Carmine* altarpiece, the scenes of Saint Humilitas in the Uffizi, the illustrations in a fourteenth-century manuscript of Dante’s *Inferno* in the Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, Perugia, and similar works were unquestionably reference points for the Master of the Osservanza. Carli (1957, pp. 44, 120) has also rightly emphasized the importance of the example of Gentile da Fabriano’s *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi, where artists could find solutions to a variety of problems posed by landscape painting, as well as an unparalleled source of motifs. Gentile was employed in Siena in 1425/26, and his work had a determining impact on both Sassetta and Giovanni di Paolo. It is, therefore, not necessary to posit a familiarity with Franco-Flemish miniatures in order to ex-

plain the landscape settings of the Saint Anthony series, but neither can the possibility that the Master of the Osservanza saw a miniature like Jacquemart de Hesdin’s *Flight into Egypt* from the *Très Riches Heures* in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, be discounted.

KC

10 g. The Journey and Meeting of Saint Anthony with Saint Paul the Hermit

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 47.8 × 34.5 cm.; painted surface 46.4 × 33.4 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1.5 cm. and cradled. The original, lipped edge is visible on all sides.

Saint Anthony’s meeting with Saint Paul the Hermit, one of the most frequently represented episodes of his life, is not recounted by Athanasius but comes, instead, from Saint Jerome’s *Life of Saint Paul* (AA.SS. Januarii, i, pp. 602–9). It is included in Cavalca’s *Vite dei santi padri*. According to Jerome, Saint Paul the Hermit was one hundred and thirteen when Anthony, himself a non-agenarian, had a vision in which it was revealed that he was not the first desert hermit, but that this honor belonged instead to Saint Paul, whom he was instructed to seek out. Without knowing where Paul dwelt, Anthony set out to find him. He was assisted in his journey by a centaur, who indicated the way, as well as by a satyr, who, “as a sign of peace and security offered [Anthony] dates” (Cavalca, chapter II), and by a wolf. He found Paul dwelling in a cave beneath a rocky hill, and here the two saints greeted each other and embraced.

The Washington panel, which was purchased prior to 1861 by Granville Edward Harcourt Vernon (Shapley 1979, p. 319), shows Saint Anthony setting out, in the background; meeting the satyr, who holds a palm branch with dates; and tenderly embracing Saint Paul in front of the cave, beside which is a spring of water described by Jerome and Cavalca. The pale pink chapel in the distance provides a link with the previous scene and is another example of the attention lavished by the Master of the Osservanza on details of setting. The dense woods play no part in Jerome’s narrative and may, instead, refer to the groves from which the Augustinian hermitage of Lecceto derives its name.

First published by Waterhouse (1931, pp. 108–13) after its exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club (1930–31, no. 19), the picture has been admired for its naïve simplicity and evocative landscape, and it has been grouped with the finest panels of the series (Pope-Hennessy



*Master of the
Osservanza*



10 h

1956, p. 366, and 1987, p. 108). The characterizations of the two hermit saints are of great beauty, but the composition as a whole is not without weaknesses. The series of flat hills and the broken path, which worked so brilliantly in the *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold* (cat. 10 f), are far less successful here. The forest of trees is used, in part, to mask an inherent inability to create a convincing spatial continuum. Moreover, the pointillist technique employed to create the foliage disintegrates in places into meaningless dots. The horizon line is singularly lacking in visual interest. This apparent slackening of creative powers is perhaps due to the less visible placement of the panel high up in the complex, for it cannot be doubted that the Master of the Osservanza was responsible for the design of the panel and the execution of the two figures in the foreground.

KC

10 h. The Funeral of Saint Anthony

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 37.5 × 39.5 cm. (with added strips); painted surface 36.3 × 38.5 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1.1 cm. and cradled. There are remnants of the original, lipped edge on the sides and bottom, and traces of gold on all edges.

Athanasius and Cavalca (chapter XVIII) have little to say about Saint Anthony's funeral, since the saint died in the presence of two brethren whom he instructed to bury his body quickly and secretly, which they did. The monastic funeral depicted in the Washington panel, with a community of monks gathered around the saint's bier in the nave of their church, is perhaps the strongest evidence that the series was created for the special requirements of a monastic (probably Augustinian) foundation.

The basic features of the composition derive from representations of the death of Saint Francis, in which a figure is generally shown kneeling in front of the funeral bier. The scene has been thought to depend on Sassetta's *Funeral of Saint Francis* in the National Gallery, London, which is from the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, completed in 1444 (Brandi 1949, p. 199; Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 366). If this could be demonstrated, then a reference point for the date of the series would be established. However, the similarities are, on the whole, generic. It was maintained (Brandi 1949, p. 199; Pope-Hennessy 1956, pp. 365–66) that a shadow visible beneath the bier when the panel was discovered in 1947 proved the dependence on Sassetta's scene, but the shadow was found to be a later

addition, and was removed during cleaning (Shapley 1966, p. 142). Perhaps the closest—although probably fortuitous—point of comparison with Sassetta's composition is the fact that initially the nave of the church was to be viewed head on and shown vaulted: The incisions for three arches in perspective are clearly visible on the surface, but the fact that they were not carried out was doubtless motivated by their unsuitability to the horizontal format of the panel.

A disparity between the masterful handling of the interior space—with its vistas through open doors into a sacristy with an open cupboard, and a cloister planted with cypresses—and the diminutive figures has been noted, the hypothesis being that the artist who painted *Saint Anthony at Mass* (cat. 10 a) and the architecture of *Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth* (cat. 10 b) designed the space, while an inferior painter was responsible for the figures (Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 366). This idea is consistent with the position stated in the introductory entry that all of the scenes reflect the conception of the presiding master, here accepted as the Master of the Osservanza. However, it cannot be denied that the bright palette, the concern for volume, and the optical technique of juxtaposing colors to suggest the modeling of forms in terms of light coincide with the characteristics of the *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman* (cat. 10 d). It is perfectly logical that this pair of scenes, which possibly formed a predella, should have been carried out by an associate whose interests differed somewhat from those of the master in charge. The result is a scene more remarkable for its colloquial tone and overall conception than for its poetic interpretation of the subject.

KC

11. The Dream of Saint Joseph

Mr. and Mrs. Marco Grassi, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 16.1 × 12.7 cm.; painted surface 14 × 10.5 cm. Technical examination of the panel establishes that the gold and tooling are integral, and that the picture surface has not been cut down. The panel has a vertical grain.

Saint Joseph is shown asleep, outside the opening of the stable—traditionally represented as a cave, in conformity with the apocryphal *Proto-Evangelium*—while within, a saddle and the manger with the Christ Child are partly visible. As recounted in Matthew (2:13), an angel appears to Joseph in a dream to warn him to flee into Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod.



Figure 1. Master of the Osservanza. *The Birth of the Virgin*. Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano



Figure 2. Master of the Osservanza. *The Assumption of the Virgin*. Whereabouts unknown

The scene is unusual, for on the few occasions when the dream of Saint Joseph is shown, it is a subsidiary episode of the Flight into Egypt—as in Duccio's *Maestà* and Nicola Pisano's pulpit in Siena Cathedral.

There is no precedent for the cropping of the scene at the right, but the same type of double-square punch used in the border also appears in the predella of the Master of the Osservanza's altarpiece from the Church of the Osservanza (Siena Pinacoteca). Given the vertical grain of the wood, it is conceivable that the picture was a projecting element of a predella, beneath a colonnette or pilaster. The provenance of the panel can be traced back no farther than 1903, when it was sold by Félix Ravaisson-Mollien (Hôtel Drouot, Paris, November 23, 1903, no. 2: as by Baldovinetti). Berenson (1904, p. 142) associated it with a scene of the *Gathering of the Apostles*, then in the Crespi collection, Milan, and now at the Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence. That picture formed part of the altarpiece of the Birth of the Virgin, in Asciano, then attributed to Sassetta but now recognized as a key work of the Master of the Osservanza (see fig. 1). The association of these two scenes is highly conjectural (see Pope-Hennessy 1939, pp. 180, 201, n. 110). Nonetheless, two factors bear consideration: The first is the general agreement of style; the second stems from a reassessment of the original appearance of the Asciano altarpiece, which was described in its present state by Brogi in 1865 (1897, p. 12).

The Asciano altarpiece consists of a large, tripartite scene of the Birth of the Virgin, surmounted by three panels of the Death of the Virgin, the Madonna of Humility, and the Funeral of the Virgin. It has been assumed that only the predella is lacking. However, a technical examination of the altarpiece reveals that, like its compositional model, Pietro Lorenzetti's *Birth of the Virgin* in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena, and like Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio's *Nativity*, also in Asciano, the narrative scene of the Birth of the Virgin was originally flanked by two panels of full-length saints (the presence of dowel holes along the vertical edges of the *Birth of the Virgin* confirms this). Logically, these would have been surmounted by panels with two episodes relating to the Death of the Virgin. One of these is the I Tatti picture, which was transferred to canvas in Russia in 1870, supplied with false corners to create a rectangular composition, and regilt. The other panel presumably showed the Burial of the Virgin. These were, in turn, surmounted by four pinnacles, the lateral ones not exceeding 28 cm. in width, and the center one less than 48 cm. (this can, again, be demonstrated by the presence of slots for supporting carpentry in the battens on the reverses of the existing scenes). The center pinnacle unquestionably showed the Assumption of the Virgin, and



11 (enlarged)

a panel with this subject, attributable to the Master of the Osservanza, is known (sale, Christie's, London, December 5, 1969, no. 126: 54.5 × 35.5 cm.; see fig. 2). The subjects of the other four panels are conjectural. If the model provided by Duccio's *Maestà* was adhered to, they may have shown busts of angels similar to the recut panel in the collection of the University of Kansas (Shapley 1966, p. 144). However, there can be little doubt that the extensive cycle devoted to the Death of the Virgin was balanced by an equally complete cycle showing events following her birth and probably including the Nativity. A depiction of the Dream of Saint Joseph could well have been included in such a cycle. To date, the only panel that can reasonably be associated with the predella of the *Birth of the Virgin*—which must have contained at least five scenes—is a *Pietà* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon (32 × 59 cm.; the center panel of the *Birth of the Virgin* measures 68.8 cm. and the side panels 44 and 43 cm., respectively).

The picture was attributed to Sassetta at its sale in 1933 (Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris, May 19, 1933, no. 20: as *Saint Peter and the Angel*), when it was exhibited in 1959 ("The World as Symbol," Queens College, Flushing, no. 97), as well as in the most recent lists by Berenson (1968, p. 386: as *Joachim and the Angel*). It was recently sold as a work by Sano di Pietro (Sotheby's, New York, May 21, 1985, no. 136).

KC

THE PASSION PREDELLA (catalogue 12 a–d)

After the Saint Anthony series (cat. 10 a–h), the Master of the Osservanza's most significant narrative cycle consists of five panels depicting events from the Passion of Christ, four of which are included here. They document a later phase in the artist's career when he was less obviously dependent on the example of Sassetta for his narrative style. Indeed, the concern for space, the wonderfully evocative landscapes, and the effective use of brilliant, contrasting colors place these paintings among the most remarkable creations of the Early Renaissance in Siena, and pose the question of the master's relationship both to his compatriots and, possibly, to contemporary Florentine art.

The scenes show: (a) *The Flagellation of Christ*; (b) *The Way to Calvary*; *The Crucifixion* (in the Museum of Western Art, Kiev); (c) *The Descent into Limbo*; and (d) *The Resurrection*. That the panels come from a single predella of an altarpiece is not open to doubt: Their dimensions, format, style, and subject matter are entirely consistent,

and formal devices are ingeniously employed to relate one scene to another (the bench in the first scene echoes the projecting wall in the second; the declining line of the cave in the fourth scene is repeated by the horizon of the last). The *Crucifixion* has a gilt instead of a painted background, but this is not unusual—a parallel is provided by the predella of the Osservanza altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca. Nor does the order of the scenes present special problems, although the last two could, in principle, be interchanged. (Carli 1960, p. 334, placed the *Resurrection* before the *Descent into Limbo*, but not only does this order reverse their chronological sequence; it is less satisfactory from a compositional standpoint, and is also contradicted by the matching widths of the *Flagellation* and the *Resurrection*.) The scenes were separated by gilt vertical bands decorated with an interlace pattern. None of the panels can be traced earlier than about 1860, when the *Descent into Limbo* and the *Way to Calvary* were purportedly purchased in Rome by the eighth Earl of Northesk (*Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Paintings*, Fogg Art Museum, 1919, p. 120), and there is no indication of their original destination (their supposed Roman provenance has been thought significant: Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, pp. 36–37, n. 119).

Perkins (1921, p. 18) was the first to suggest that the *Flagellation*, the *Way to Calvary*, and the *Descent into Limbo* came from the same predella. Zeri (1954, pp. 43–44) tentatively added the *Crucifixion* (he did not know the dimensions, which are 37 × 65 cm.), and the *Resurrection* was recognized as part of the series upon its discovery (sale, Sotheby's, London, June 24, 1959, no. 64). None of the main panels can be identified with certainty. Carli (1957, pp. 102–4, and 1960, p. 338) suggested that a fragmentary figure of Saint John the Baptist, formerly in the Perkins collection, Assisi (sale, Sotheby's, London, April 8, 1987, no. 1: 70.5 × 47.5 cm.) may have been one of the lateral panels. This is possible.¹ A *Madonna and Child* in the Robert Lehman Collection (cat. 13) can be related to the predella panels on grounds of date, dimensions, and the unusual inscription in the Christ Child's halo referring to the Crucifixion (Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 110); it is shown here with the predella. It should be emphasized that the association of either the *Madonna and Child* or the fragmentary *Saint John the Baptist* with the Passion predella is purely hypothetical.

Predellas devoted to the Passion were not uncommon in fifteenth-century Siena: At least five others are known.² The episodes depicted in these vary somewhat, but the predella of the Master of the Osservanza is unusual in substituting the *Flagellation of Christ* for the *Agony in the Garden* (a fourteenth-century Siennese altarpiece of the Resurrection, in the Museo Civico, Sansepolcro, provides a precedent). The reasons for this choice are not evident, although the master obviously relished the opportunity

to depict an interior space with figures in action. For each of the events shown there existed an established iconography, which provided the master with a fundamental reference point. Features of the *Flagellation*, the *Way to Calvary*, and the *Descent into Limbo* can be traced back to Duccio's *Maestà*, and the *Crucifixion* is conceived in terms that recall such works as Pietro Lorenzetti's fresco in the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi. In each case, however, the scheme has been updated by means of the prominence accorded the settings, which no longer function as mere backdrops for the action. In the *Flagellation*, the figures are positioned in depth, and Christ and Pilate occupy only one half of the composition, while the other half is given over to an architectural view and secondary figures. In the *Resurrection*, an off-center figure of Christ is counterpoised by a landscape of dark, undulating hills viewed against the dawn-colored sky. Despite these prominent settings, the architectural details reveal little interest in the Early Renaissance vocabulary that was, concurrently, being introduced into Sienese painting by Vecchietta and, in a more diluted form, by Domenico di Bartolo. Nor is the perspective system employed in the *Flagellation* significantly more advanced than in the *Saint Anthony at Mass* (cat. 10 a), although it is more rigorously applied.

This equivocation between tradition and modernity is exemplified by the *Crucifixion*, in which the group of Pharisees on the right has been shown to derive from a panel by Gregorio di Cecco in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, while the soldier holding a shield and the foreshortened horses closing off the composition have been thought to reflect the work of Domenico Veneziano (Zeri 1954, p. 44; Carli 1957, p. 102). That Domenico Veneziano had a decisive impact on Sienese painting in the 1440s cannot be doubted (see Zeri 1961, pp. 34–36), and Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio's work demonstrates the attraction Florentine art in general could exert. Nonetheless, in the case of the Master of the Osservanza it would be misleading to overestimate the influence of Florentine art—let alone that of an artist as intellectually and spiritually remote from his concerns as Domenico Veneziano. Rather, the primary reference point remained Sassetta's early *Arte della Lana* altarpiece (cat. 1 a–f), whose innovative compositions seem to have acquired new relevance as the artistic horizons of the Master of the Osservanza expanded. The setting of the *Flagellation*, with its pronounced oblique wall, its front piers aligned with the picture plane, and its vanishing point in the open door behind Christ, pays homage to Sassetta's *Saint Thomas Aquinas in Prayer* (cat. 1 b), while the ambitiously foreshortened horses and the shield bearer in the *Crucifixion* derive from the *Burning of a Heretic* (cat. 1 e). It was, paradoxically, the cultural conservatism of the master ("d'una cultura . . . più insistentemente

arcaica," in the words of Longhi 1940, pp. 188–89, n. 26) that at once inhibited his understanding of the highly expressive, neo-Gothic style of Sassetta's contemporary Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, and impelled him toward an equilibrated type of composition superficially akin to Renaissance art.

Unlike the Saint Anthony series, the Passion predella scenes were recognized by most critics as the work of a close follower of Sassetta (see Perkins 1918, pp. 113–14, and 1921, pp. 14–18). Berenson (1932, pp. 498, 500–501; also, in Edgell 1932, pp. 195–97) had suggested that they might be by the young Sano di Pietro, while Pope-Hennessy (1939, pp. 174–77, and 1956, p. 369) maintained that they were the work of an independent disciple who, in the *Descent into Limbo*, possibly employed a design by Sassetta. The predella is now universally ascribed to the artist who painted the Osservanza altarpiece. It is, however, notable that some of the same differences of style observable in the Saint Anthony series are evident in these scenes as well, and that the predella is likely to have been the product of a collaborative workshop (see Pope-Hennessy 1956, p. 369; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 28). The distinctions of style are perhaps most pronounced in the scenes of the *Descent into Limbo* and the *Resurrection*—the former characterized by an enamel-like surface, volumetric hills, and sturdily constructed figures, and the latter by figures and hills that are flatter, conceived primarily in terms of silhouette, and by brushwork that is less dense and more delicate. The second of these styles is clearly that of the Master of the Osservanza, who would seem to have designed and painted the *Flagellation* and the *Crucifixion* as well. Whether the other hand can be identified with the associate responsible for two of the scenes in the Saint Anthony series (cat. 10 d, h) is less certain. The most that can be said is that the concerns expressed are analogous. The exhibition of the two narrative cycles offers the opportunity to reach a more satisfactory conclusion on this matter.

Crucial to understanding the nature of these scenes is the date assigned to them. While it is generally agreed that the Passion predella is among the latest works by the Master of the Osservanza, there is no consensus as to what specific date this implies (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 175: after 1440, 1956, pp. 369–70: after 1444, and 1987, p. 110: 1433–early 1440s; Graziani 1948, p. 85: 1436–40; Brandi 1949, p. 72: about 1436; Zeri 1954, p. 44: 1440–45; Carli 1957, pp. 102, 129–31: 1440–45, and 1960, pp. 335–38: 1444–45; Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 28: about 1465). It is, however, unlikely that the holy woman viewed from the back in the *Crucifixion*, her drapery and pose of unusual complexity, could have been conceived without familiarity with Sassetta's Passion predella—particularly, with the *Way to Calvary* in The Detroit Institute of Arts. This is one of the few references in the Master

of the Osservanza's work to Sassetta's late style, and it implies a date no earlier than the late 1430s. No less indicative is the fact that representations of the risen Christ floating above or in front of his tomb rarely occur in Sienese painting prior to the 1440s, when he was so depicted by Vecchietta on the reliquary doors (the *Arli-quiera* of 1445) now in the Siena Pinacoteca, and by Sano di Pietro, in a small panel in Cologne (cat. 16). Sano's depiction, which is datable with some certainty to 1444–45, has reasonably been thought to derive from that of the Master of the Osservanza, inasmuch as Sano later freely adapted the compositions of the *Resurrection* and *Descent into Limbo* for the lunette of his altarpiece at San Quirico d'Orcia, south of Siena (Carli 1960, pp. 335–37). This establishes a date for the Passion predella of about 1440–44, in exact conjunction with the completion of Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece and the painting of Sano di Pietro's altarpiece for the Gesuati (now in the Siena Pinacoteca). A comparison of the predella with the narrative scenes in those works amply underscores the approach of the Master of the Osservanza, who attempts neither the spatial complexity of Sassetta's work nor the active poses of Sano's figures, but effects, instead, a carefully maintained and exquisite balance between the examples of his forebears and the innovations of his contemporaries.

KC

1. A fragmentary figure of Saint Anthony Abbot, in the Louvre, in which the background has been similarly regilt, might be thought to be a companion to the Saint John (it measures 73 × 59 cm.). However, as the scale of the two figures differs considerably, they must come from different altarpieces (see Laclotte 1978, pp. 34–35).
2. The predella of Giovanni di Paolo's Pecci altarpiece, of 1426, contained scenes of the *Raising of Lazarus*, the *Way to Calvary*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Deposition*, and the *Entombment* (see Zeri 1976, pp. 116–21). The choice of subjects—among which was the *Raising of Lazarus*, a prefiguration of the Resurrection—seems to reflect a concern for theological exegesis typical of the Dominicans for whose church the altarpiece was painted. In a later predella for an unidentified altarpiece, Giovanni di Paolo included the *Agony in the Garden*, the *Way to Calvary*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Deposition*, and, presumably, the *Resurrection*. The three extant panels of a predella by Sassetta, possibly for the reverse of the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece of 1437–44, represent the *Agony in the Garden*, the *Taking of Christ*, and the *Way to Calvary* (see Béguin 1978, pp. 21–34). Benvenuto di Giovanni's predella (cat. 62 a–e) comprises the *Agony in the Garden*, the *Way to Calvary*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Descent into Limbo*, and the *Resurrection*. The earliest and most extensive fifteenth-century Passion predella is the series of nine scenes for Taddeo di Bartolo's altarpiece, dated 1401, in the cathedral of Montepulciano: The subjects are the *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, the *Last Supper*, the *Taking of Christ*, the *Way to Calvary*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Entombment*, the *Resurrection*, the *Descent into Limbo*, and the *Road to Emmaus*.

12 a. The Flagellation of Christ

Vatican Museums, Vatican City

Tempera and gold on wood. 36.5 × 45.7 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned to 1.2 cm. The paint surface retains its original, lipped edges on the top and bottom. There are remnants of the vertical gilt and tooled borders that separated the individual scenes.

The painting, which entered the Museo Cristiano at an unspecified date in the nineteenth century (Volbach 1987, p. 60), shows Christ bound to a column beneath the star-spangled blue vaults of the hall of judgment. At the right, Pilate descends the steps of his throne and gestures toward the chief priests and Pharisees, who “went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled” (John 18:28). In conformity with a Byzantine formula favored by Duccio in the *Maestà*, Christ stands behind the column, or pier, with his hands bound together before him. This scheme was not universally adopted in Siena, and had been notably abandoned by Vecchietta in the reliquary doors of 1445 for an alternative solution, favored in Florentine art, in which Christ's torso was shown fully exposed, with the column behind him. The poses of the two torturers, more carefully articulated than those of the devils in the *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils* (cat. 10 e), are near mirror images—a device to counteract the asymmetry of the composition and confer a rhythmic unity on the work. The animated pose of the figure on the left has a lineage going back at least as far as Ugolino's scene, in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem, from the predella of his altarpiece for the high altar of Santa Croce, Florence. Particularly noteworthy for the Master of the Osservanza is the relatively strict adherence to a perspective system with the vanishing point in the open door behind Christ, at the height of Pilate and the Jews. The piers are located at the intersection of the principal orthogonals and transversals, which seem to have been incised into the preparation (only some are visible). This is, perhaps, an approximation—but only an approximation—of Albertian practice. The perspective is not, however, consistently applied, and the proportional relationship between objects that Alberti's system assured is absent. Nonetheless, the artist felt confident enough to depict the lit façade and moldings of a building shown in steep foreshortening through an open archway, and he has employed the horizon line as a narrative device, uniting the gaze and gesture of Pilate with those of the assembled priests. The priest who departs down a narrow street in the background is an especially effective detail, and bears comparison with Vecchietta's fresco of *Solomon in the Temple* in the reliquary chapel of the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena. The view through the window grille onto the pink-and-gray architecture further develops an idea first explored in the *Saint An-*



thony Distributing His Wealth (cat. 10 b). There is a pentimento at the lower left, where incisions record what appears to have been a step.

From the time that Perkins (1906, pp. 31, 122) first drew attention to the picture as a work by Sassetta, the *Flagellation* has been widely admired. Perkins himself soon realized that it was painted by a pupil (1918, p. 113, and 1921, p. 18), and Pope-Hennessy (1939, pp. 174–75) made the *Flagellation* the eponymous work of an independent master, most of whose paintings have since been absorbed into the oeuvre of the Master of the Osservanza. Berenson (1932, p. 501) suggested that this pupil may have been the young Sano di Pietro. The work by Sano with which it bears closest comparison is the *Flagellation of Saint Jerome* from the predella of the Gesuati altarpiece of 1444 (Louvre, Paris). Yet, in that work, the influence of Domenico di Bartolo is pervasive: The active poses of the figures are based on a system of rhythmic curves, the patterned floor is laid out with geometric regularity, and the square piers are fluted to suggest Renaissance architecture. These features subsequently appear in the Master of the Osservanza's predella with the *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew* in the Siena Pinacoteca. The sequence of these three works documents the continued and close contact between the Master of the Osservanza and Sano di Pietro, but it also underscores the fact that they are by two distinct artists.

KC

12 b. The Way to Calvary

Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 36.8 × 46.8 cm.; painted surface 35 × 42.7 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, is between 3.5 and 3.8 cm. thick, and has not been thinned. The original edge is intact on the top and bottom; the area beyond the picture surface has been filled and overpainted.

Christ, clad in a pink tunic, his hands bound, is led to Calvary by a rope around his neck. Behind him is a jostling crowd of lance-bearing soldiers and civilians, followed by three Romans mounted on horses: the first evidently a prefect; the second identifiable as Longinus, who suffered from a malady of the eyes that was healed at the Crucifixion by a drop of Christ's blood (see *The Golden Legend*, March 15); and a standard bearer. From the gates of the city emerge "a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him" (Luke 23:27). Among them are the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and Saint John the Evangelist.

In general, the scene conforms to a composition first devised by Simone Martini and frequently repeated thereafter with variations, most notably by Giovanni di Paolo (cat. 27). However, the composition by the Master of the Osservanza differs from these depictions in several significant details. Christ does not bear his cross—apparently carried by Simon of Cyrene—but stands motionless, simultaneously pushed and pulled; mounted figures are included; and instead of being threatened by a soldier, a young man seems to commiserate with the holy women. The first detail, which conforms to Luke's account of the episode, derives from the depiction in Duccio's *Maestà*, as does the pose of the Virgin, with her right hand eloquently raised. The other two details are evidently personal interpolations by the master, as is the building from whose windows spectators watch the procession. Radiographs suggest that initially the scene was set in an open landscape with a continuous range of hills (see below). It is also worth noting that the city wall, whose low projection mirrors Pilate's bench in the previous scene, was first positioned at an oblique angle (the gate and crenellations also underwent some revision).

The result of these various changes is a highly personal narrative in which the figure of Christ and that of the Virgin, toward whom he gazes, gain enormously by their symmetrical placement to either side of the equestrian group. The dramatic effects espoused by Giovanni di Paolo are replaced by poignancy. The use of the receding wall and façade of the house to define the foreground marks a greater concern for space, although it is, perhaps, typical of the Master of the Osservanza that the angle of recession of the projecting wall should coincide more or less with the diagonal formed by the arm of the cross, held



12 b: radiograph



12 b



12 c

parallel to the picture plane. No less typical are the sharp contours of the figures, a number of whom are viewed in profile, and the delicate, flat shapes of the hills.

This intensely colored picture, dominated by the brilliant orange city wall and accents of vermilion, blue, and green, was apparently purchased in Rome together with the *Descent into Limbo* (cat. 12 c) about 1860 by the eighth Earl of Northesk (sale, Sotheby's, London, June 30, 1915, no. 124: as Tuscan school; purchased together with cat. 12 c by Langton Douglas). Perkins (1918, p. 113, n. 5, and 1921, pp. 14–17) published the picture as by a pupil of Sassetta, possibly working from a design by the master (he records Langton Douglas's attribution of the painting to Sassetta). He also associated it with the *Flagellation* and the *Descent into Limbo* (cat. 12 a, c), with whose history the picture has subsequently always been linked (except by van Marle 1927, IX, p. 330, n. 1, who confused it with the painting of the same subject by Giovanni di Paolo). The attribution by Berenson (1932, p. 500) to Sano di Pietro was retained by the museum until recently (Sweeney 1966, pp. 68–69).

KC

12 c. The Descent into Limbo

Harvard University Art Museums (Fogg Art Museum),
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Tempera and gold on wood. 38 × 47 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. The paint surface retains its original, lipped edge at the top and bottom. The tooled vertical borders have been removed, but there is a trace of tooling in the remaining gesso preparation at the upper right.

Inscribed (on Saint John's scroll): ECCE A[GNUS DEI]

Christ's descent into Limbo following his death on the cross and prior to his resurrection is recounted in the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate*, from which a fairly uniform iconography evolved, epitomized in Duccio's *Maestà*: Christ is shown trampling Satan beneath the gate to the dark cave of hell, his right hand extended to kneeling figures of Adam and Eve; David, wearing his crown and royal robes, holds the book of Psalms, while other Old Testament prophets and patriarchs, including John the Baptist, look on. The main lines of the Master of the Osservanza's composition conform to this formula. He has, however, introduced three features that derive directly from the *Acts of Pilate* or the gloss contained in *The Golden Legend*. By far the most significant as well as poetic of these is the "golden and purple light" that radiates from Christ—the great light that, according to Isaiah (9:2), was seen by those who walked in darkness

and dwelt in the region of the shadow of death. As Christ enters, Saint John the Baptist gestures toward him. Christ's hand is extended not to Adam and Eve, who are shown standing at the back, to the left of a cluster of figures, but, apparently, to the sons of Simeon, Karinus and Leucius, who supposedly rose from the dead with Christ, and whose account of Christ's descent into Limbo comprises the *Acts of Pilate*. These touches once again underscore the Master of the Osservanza's innate talent for giving visual form to a text. Scarcely less indicative is the landscape of barren, greenish peaks beneath a cold, moonlit sky—transformed in the adjacent scene to softly rounded hills outlined against a radiant dawn. The contrast between the natural light and the miraculous radiance of Christ draws on Gentile da Fabriano's experiments in the predella of the *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece in the Uffizi, Florence—or had Gentile's altarpiece painted for the notaries' palace in Siena in 1425–26 included a predella with scenes from the Passion (Christiansen 1982, pp. 50, 137)?

Together with the companion panel of the *Way to Calvary* (cat. 12 b), the picture is said to have been purchased in Rome about 1860 by the eighth Earl of Northesk (*Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Paintings*, Fogg Art Museum, 1919, p. 120; sale, Sotheby's, London, June 30, 1915, no. 127: as Early Italian school). It was referred to by Perkins (1918, pp. 113–14, n. 5, and 1921, p. 17) as designed by Sassetta and painted by a pupil—an idea to which Pope-Hennessy (1956, p. 369) later returned. Although this hypothesis has, correctly, been rejected by subsequent critics, it is nonetheless clear that both the design and execution of the panel differ in significant respects from the other scenes of the Passion predella. The closest points of comparison for the concern for volume and contrasting colors are to be found, on the one hand, in the Yale *Saint Anthony Tempted* (cat. 10 d) and, on the other, in the scene of *Saint Jerome in Penitence* from Sano di Pietro's Gesuati altarpiece of 1444, in which there is a strong analogy to the hills and cave opening. Whether, as Berenson (1932, p. 498) first tentatively proposed, Sano was responsible for painting this scene under the supervision of the Master of the Osservanza remains no more than a surmise.

KC



12 d

12 d. The Resurrection

The Detroit Institute of Arts

Tempera and gold on wood. 36.9 × 45.9 cm.; painted surface 36 × 44.3 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. The original, lipped edge is preserved at the top and bottom; there are remnants of the vertical tooled gold border and of the decoration of interlaced patterns.

Unquestionably one of the masterpieces of Sienese fifteenth-century painting, this wonderfully poetic work was published by Carli (1960, pp. 333–40) following its sale by the Convent of All Saints in London (Sotheby's, London, June 24, 1959, no. 64: as by the Master of the Osservanza). Its innovative composition marks a departure from earlier representations of the subject in Siena, where the Resurrection was usually alluded to referentially by depicting the three Maries at the tomb, as in Duccio's *Maestà*, or by showing Christ erect, emerging from an open tomb surrounded by sleeping soldiers, as in the predella of Ugolino's Santa Croce altarpiece in the National Gallery, London (on this iconography, see Meiss 1951, pp. 38–40; and cat. 16). Here, a Ghibertian-style sarcophagus, aligned along the center axis, is sealed shut, while the risen Christ, an olive branch in one hand and a fluttering standard of victory in the other, is suspended off-center above a small bank of clouds in an aureole of golden light. Below, three of the soldiers, their weapons lying in studied disarray, stare upward in frightened disbelief, while a fourth hides his face (the silvered armor of the soldiers is now largely reduced to the bole preparation).

The sealed tomb is explained by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend* as follows: "Just as He came from the sealed womb of His mother and came to the disciples through sealed doors, so He was able to go out of the sealed tomb." Despite this explicit description, the iconography is rare. (It occurs in the intarsia choir stalls in the Cappella de' Signori.) Even in Florence, where depictions of Christ floating above the tomb are more frequently encountered, the tomb is usually open, with the lid ajar or discarded, and the soldiers are shown asleep; this is the formula adopted by Vecchietta in the reliquary doors of 1445 (now in the Siena Pinacoteca) and in his bronze relief, of 1472 (in The Frick Collection, New York).

The profusion of flowers and fruit-laden trees is traditional, but this is, perhaps, the earliest extant scene in Italian art of the resurrected Christ viewed against—or rather in counterpoint to—an extensive landscape, with a sky colored by the first rays of dawn. This marvelously poetic touch—at once naturalistic and symbolic—marks an advance as representation over the Lehman *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold* (cat. 10 f) and the Yale *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman* (cat. 10 d). Not surprisingly, the colored ho-

zison was adopted by Sano di Pietro in his small *Resurrection* of 1444–45 (cat. 16), as well as in the lunette of his altarpiece at San Quirico d'Orcia. That both depend on the Master of the Osservanza's depiction is established by a miniature in a Gradual painted by Sano after 1456 for the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala (Alessi and Damiani 1984, pp. 167, 175, n. 43; Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 226) in which the pose of a kneeling soldier is almost identical to that in the predella, and the cloak around Christ unfurls in a closely analogous manner. However, in none of these representations does Sano approach the chaste beauty of the Detroit picture, with its rhapsodic evocation of southern Tuscany and the contrast between the angular contours of the soldiers and the statuesque calm of Christ—whose drapery has been compared, somewhat misleadingly, to the work of Jacopo della Quercia or of Antonio Federighi (Carli 1960, p. 337).

KC

13. Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Two Cherubim

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 143.5 × 69.5 cm. The support, 3.8 cm. thick, is composed of three vertical grained planks. The engaged frame is original above the heads of the cherubim, alongside which are visible irregular fields, now regilt, that contained the missing capitals.

Inscribed (in the halo of the Child): YESUS NAÇAR ENVSR EX-
IV[DAEORVM]; (in the halo of the Virgin): MARIA·MATER·
GRATIE·ET·MISER[ICORDIA]; (on the scroll): EGO: S[VM]

This magnificent and well-preserved image of the Madonna, solemnly seated on a backless marble throne supporting her sturdy infant, is one of the key works to an understanding of the Master of the Osservanza and his relationship to Sano di Pietro—to whom the picture was long ascribed (Perkins 1913, p. 123; Gaillard 1923, p. 204; van Marle 1927, IX, p. 483; Berenson 1932, p. 500; Laclotte 1957, pp. 38–39); it was Berenson (1968, p. 253) who first attributed the painting to the Master of the Osservanza (see also Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 22; Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 110).

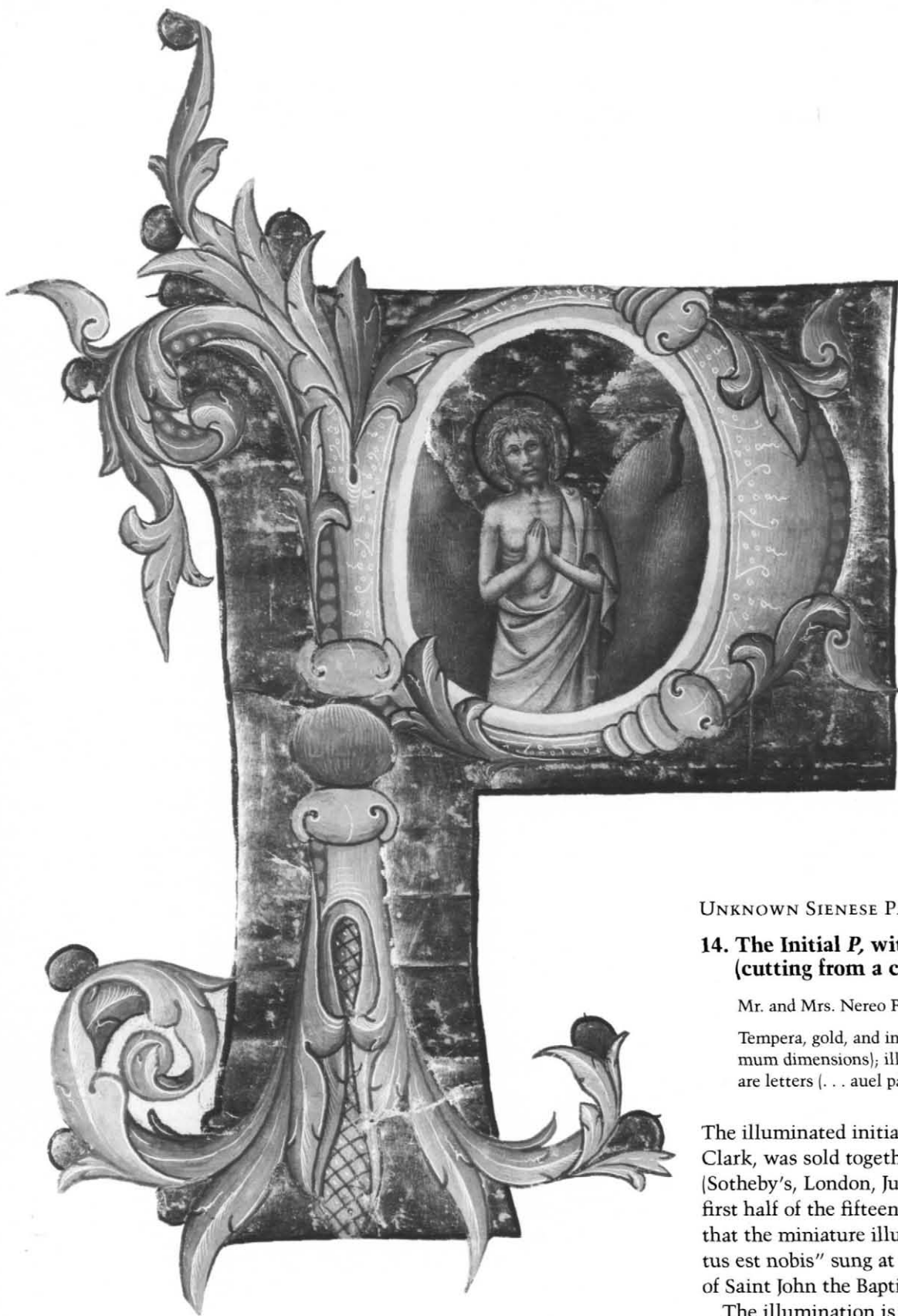
The relationship to Sano is one of morphology—the head of the Christ Child and those of the cherubim particularly resemble his work—rather than of design. Indeed, the composition is conceived in terms of the static, rigidly geometrical system common to other works by the Master of the Osservanza, rather than according to the more dynamic, curvilinear rhythms employed by Sano throughout his career. As Laclotte noted, the com-



position derives from the center panel of the Osservanza altarpiece, although the manner in which the Virgin's cloak spills onto the intarsia floor to fill the foreground with its abstract shape seems to owe something to the center panel of Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece of 1437–44. However, in the hands of the Master of the Osservanza the delicate lyricism of Sassetta's work has assumed a cool aloofness, conferring on the Virgin the appearance of a sacred idol rather than an approachable mother. No less typical of the Master of the Osservanza is the bold insertion into the composition of the marble throne, whose emphatically foreshortened form bears direct comparison with the tomb of Christ in the *Resurrection* (cat. 12 d): Given the probable date of about 1440–45 for the present picture, its affinities of style with the Passion predella, and the exceptional inscription on Christ's halo of the words from the superscription of the cross, there is a strong possibility that it may come from the same altarpiece.

While the *Madonna and Child* seems to have been conceived by the Master of the Osservanza, its superficial resemblance to the work of Sano di Pietro requires some comment. An analogous case is provided by the altarpiece of *Saint George* in the church of San Cristoforo, Siena: Although the Master of the Osservanza seems to have created the cartoon, Sano was clearly responsible for painting the princess and the cityscape in the background, as well as the predella (now in the Vatican) of two subsequent episodes in the saint's life. The *Saint George* was provided for in a will of Giorgio Tolomei, dated August 11, 1440 (Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 22), and was probably painted not long thereafter. The collaboration of the two artists at this date—when Sano had an independent workshop—initially may seem surprising, but a number of the punches employed in tooling the gold in the Osservanza altarpiece and in the *Birth of the Virgin* in Asciano (key works by the Master of the Osservanza) recur in the *Saint George*, the Lehman *Madonna and Child*, and in Sano's signed and dated Gesuati altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca, tending to confirm a professional partnership. The *Madonna and Child* would seem to date from the final years of this hypothetical association, when both artists had collaborated and influenced each other for perhaps as much as a decade (see also Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 110, who dates the Lehman picture prior to the Osservanza altarpiece—between 1433 and the early 1440s; and Alessi and Scapecchi 1985, p. 22, who suggest a date of about 1450).

KC



UNKNOWN SIENESE PAINTER

**14. The Initial *P*, with Saint John the Baptist
(cutting from a choir book)**

Mr. and Mrs. Nereo Fioratti, New York

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 27.3 × 18.7 cm. (maximum dimensions); illumination 9 × 7 cm. On the reverse are letters (. . . auel pa / . . . ne) and musical notations.

The illuminated initial, formerly owned by Kenneth Clark, was sold together with two unrelated cuttings (Sotheby's, London, July 3, 1984, no. 104: as Florentine, first half of the fifteenth century). It has been suggested that the miniature illustrates the antiphon "Puer qui natus est nobis" sung at Vespers on the feast of the nativity of Saint John the Baptist on June 24.

The illumination is certainly Sienese and datable to the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The impressionistically rendered trees and highlighted hills suggest the artist's familiarity with the work of Sassetta and of the Master of the Osservanza, although in other respects he would seem to belong to an older generation. KC

SANO DI PIETRO

1405–1481

Overpraised by Rio (1874, pp. 180–98) and compared by Milanesi (1873, p. 51) to Fra Angelico, Sano di Pietro has subsequently been unjustly dismissed as little more than a gifted craftsman who repeated the same tired formulas *ad nauseam*. That he lacked the genius of Sassetta or the intellectual curiosity of Vecchietta there can be no question, but he enjoyed a prestige at least as great as theirs, and he created the standard devotional type of image of the Madonna and Child with Saints that held sway to the end of the fifteenth century.

The year of his birth is usually stated as 1406, but according to a register of baptisms, no longer traceable, Sano was in fact christened on December 2, 1405 (Vasari 1850, VI, p. 183). His name appears in the guild list of 1428 just after that of Sassetta, who is presumed to have been his teacher; that same year he was paid for gilding and coloring “il Battesimo”—very likely a model for the Baptistry font drawn by Sassetta the previous year—and in 1432 he acted on Sassetta’s behalf, arbitrating the price of the *Madonna of the Snow*. Although by this time he must have been a well-established artist (he was elected captain of his neighborhood in 1431), there is no record of his independent practice until 1440. His earliest securely dated work is the large altarpiece painted for the Gesuati, and signed and dated 1444, now in the Siena Pinacoteca; this is his masterpiece, and one of the key works of fifteenth-century Sienese painting. After 1444, there are abundant records of his widespread activity, as well as dated pictures, the last of which is a *Pietà* in the Monte dei Paschi, in Siena, executed the year he died, at the age of seventy-five.

Beginning in 1445, when he signed a fresco of the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Sala di Biccherna of the Palazzo Pubblico, Sano was employed continuously by the commune. In the Palazzo Pubblico alone, he painted frescoes (1443, 1446, 1451, and 1460), the predella to an altarpiece for the Cappella de’ Signori (cat. 18 a–c), a commemorative painting of Calixtus III (1456), an altarpiece of the Annunciation (1459), and a series of book covers (1451, 1456, 1471, and 1473). Most of these works survive and are, as one would expect, of uniformly high quality.

Potentially more important was Sano’s extensive patronage by convents and confraternities of the Franciscan order. Just as Giovanni di Paolo created the canonical iconography for the life of Saint Catherine, so Sano became the interpreter of Saint Bernardino and the major exponent of the Observant movement. His depictions of Bernardino found a receptive audience throughout southern Tuscany, and his innovative scenes of the saint preaching and the various representations of his miracles (cat. 20, 24 a, b) are part of our collective image of the great Franciscan reformer. Not surprisingly, when in 1448 a portrait of Bernardino was wanted for the saint’s friend, Giovanni da Capistrano, the commission was given to Sano. It is not possible to adequately gauge the extent to which this relationship was responsible for the kind of devotional images Sano became so adept at producing, with their conventionalized but widely accessible religious sentiment and their standardized figure types. It is, however, telling that he is described as “pictor famosius et homo totus deditus Deo” (“a famous painter and completely dedicated to God”) in the necrology of the church of San Domenico, where he was buried.

Any assessment of Sano di Pietro must allow for his considerable entrepreneurial skills, as evidenced by his enormous output—greater than that of any other Sienese artist—and his relative prosperity,

as indicated by his tax declarations. There were two corollaries to this. The first was his apparent willingness to collaborate with other artists: with Vecchietta in 1439; possibly with Domenico di Bartolo in 1444–45 (see cat. 15); and with Giovanni di Paolo between 1445 and 1447. These collaborative ventures, each of which left its mark on his work, followed what may have been a decade-long association with the Master of the Osservanza, who was the single greatest influence on Sano's art. The other corollary was the establishment of a large and efficient workshop largely responsible for the altarpieces produced after about 1450. It is probable that a number of younger artists, including Neroccio de'Landi and Francesco di Giorgio, spent at least some time in Sano's workshop.

There is, finally, the matter of Sano's achievement as a miniaturist. He was first employed in this capacity by the cathedral in 1445, and continued to illuminate choir books, Psalters, and even classical texts (the frontispiece to Cicero's *Orations* in the Vatican) throughout his career. These miniatures are invariably of exquisite quality, and offer the surest guide to Sano's autograph work and his inventive capacities.

15. Madonna of Humility

The Brooklyn Museum

Tempera and gold on wood. 64.7 × 47.6 cm. (including frame). The panel has retained its original thickness of 3.2 cm. Although the engaged frame has been reworked, regilt, and repainted, it seems to be original. The picture surface has suffered particularly in the areas of the floor, the pillow, and the dress of the Virgin.

The inventive design of this modest in size but impressive picture, purchased by Frank Babbott in 1925 from Durlacher Brothers, New York, is exceptional for Sano di Pietro, who never again attempted such a realistic Child or so stolid a Virgin. The closest analogies to the lively yet compact pose of the infant Christ, with his sharply defined contours—suggestive of a low relief in marble—are in the work of Domenico di Bartolo, to whom the picture has been repeatedly attributed (van Marle 1927, IX, pp. 544–45; Berenson 1932, p. 170, and 1968, p. 109; Venturi 1931, pl. CCXX; Pope-Hennessy 1944, pp. 119, 139, n. 1; Carli 1957, p. 98; Fredericksen and Zeri 1972, p. 182). Domenico's *Madonna and Child* of 1437 in the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum provides a point of comparison, as does the child held by a nurse in the background of his fresco of the *Raising and Marriage of Foundlings* of 1441–42 in the Pellegrinaio of the Spedale della Scala (fig. 1). Despite these similarities of design with Domenico di Bartolo, the figure types, tooling, and generalized modeling are typical of Sano di Pietro (see Brandi 1949, p. 213, n. 79; Fahy 1982, p. 243; the attribution to the Master of the Osservanza, advanced by Alessi and Scapeccchi 1985, p. 26, is

without basis). The most probable explanation for this dichotomy between conception and execution is that Sano based the work on a cartoon by Domenico di Bartolo (see Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 110), just as, in the *Madonna and Child* in Montalcino, he had employed a design by Sassetta (see cat. 4). It is not difficult to suggest the circumstances under which this probably took place.



Figure 1. Domenico di Bartolo. *The Raising of Foundlings* (detail). Spedale della Scala, Siena





Figure 2. Domenico di Bartolo and Sano di Pietro. *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

In 1444, Sano dated his monumental altarpiece for the Gesuati (now in the Siena Pinacoteca), in which the emphatically three-dimensional figures reveal a manifest debt to Domenico di Bartolo (see Trübner 1925, p. 14). The following year, in the Sala di Biccherna of the Palazzo Pubblico, he completed a fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin (fig. 2) that appears to have been designed and, in part, painted by Domenico di Bartolo (on this work, see especially the analysis of Carli 1963, pp. 36–38). Whether the fresco was abandoned by Domenico, who died between July 1444 and February 1447, or whether the work was, from the outset, a collaborative project cannot be established definitively. However, given Sano's well-documented willingness to work with other artists in the interest of expediting a commission, and the fact

that in May 1444 Domenico was to provide a composition for a Coronation of the Virgin for the Spedale della Scala, it cannot be ruled out that the cartoon prepared for that commission was adapted for the fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico in collaboration with Sano.

In any case, there can be little doubt that during these years Sano attempted—with varying degrees of success—to recast his work on the example of the most extreme exponent of Florentine realism in Siena. The Babbott *Madonna of Humility* is the masterpiece of this improbable and short-lived conjunction of two antithetical styles, and it is hardly surprising that Sano quickly reverted to a more facile art based on the skillful adaptation of formulas rather than on direct observation.

KC

16. The Resurrection

Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne

Tempera and gold on wood. 41×26 cm.; painted surface 36×21.5 cm. The panel, which extends beyond the paint surface on all sides, has a vertical grain. The original, lipped edges of the paint surface are intact. The reverse has a gesso preparation and is painted red; an inscription, possibly sixteenth century, reads: *Del convento di S. Girolamo di Siena de Frati Jesua[t]i* (Klesse 1973, pp. 115–16).

In conformity with a widespread iconographic tradition exemplified in Sienese art by Andrea di Bartolo's *Resurrection* in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and by an unpublished picture by Giovanni di Paolo (fig. 1) dating, perhaps, from the late 1420s, in the collection of George A. Douglass, Riverside, Connecticut, Christ is shown in front of the opening of the tomb chamber, against which his luminous body inscribes a sinuous curve. Below him is the veined marble tomb slab, while the partial figures of two soldiers and a discarded sword are aligned along intersecting diagonals. This beautiful scheme is enlivened by the delicate leaves of a bush—a reference to the Resurrection—as well as by the intensely colored sky behind the rippling contour of the hill, echoed by the banner that Christ holds together with an olive branch (a symbol of peace).

The picture, whose surface unfortunately is worn, has wrongly but understandably been considered a fragment. Brandi (1949, p. 80) suggested that it was the door of a tabernacle—a function to which the subject is eminently suited. The format, vertical grain of the panel, its dimensions, and the fact that the reverse is also painted would seem to bear out this idea (see also Coor 1959, p. 81). The picture, purchased by the painter-collector Johann Anton Ramboux between 1832 and 1842 as a work by Giovanni di Paolo (Ramboux 1862, p. 24, no. 129; Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1886, III, p. 80, n. 5), has been ascribed to Vecchietta (Schubring 1912, p. 64) and to an anonymous follower of Sassetta (Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 178). Its attribution to Sano di Pietro, first advanced by Borenius (in Crowe and Cavalcaselle 1914, V, p. 174), can hardly be questioned and has, indeed, been accepted by all other critics (see Klesse 1973, pp. 115–17). The closest point of comparison is with the standing figure of Saint Augustine in the predella (now in the Louvre) from Sano's altarpiece for the Gesuati. This coincidence of style and provenance—according to the inscription on the reverse, the *Resurrection* seems also to have been painted for the Gesuati—can hardly be accidental. In the event that it dates to about 1444–45 (Carli 1960, p. 337; Coor 1959, p. 82, dated it in the 1430s), the *Resurrection* probably formed part of a unified scheme to redecorate the main chapel.

In 1428 the Gesuati, a lay order founded by the Sienese Blessed Giovanni Colombini and constituted by Urban V in 1367, applied to the commune of Siena for funds to enlarge their church of San Girolamo near the Porta Peruzzini. The commission for Sano's altarpiece for the high altar marked the conclusion of this building program, and resulted in his most ambitious and carefully planned work. The figures in the main panels of the Gothic polyptych are conceived with an inventiveness and a concern for three-dimensional form that he never again equaled. Similarly, the seven scenes of the predella reveal a narrative gift and a mastery of both architectural space and landscape that belies his reputation as a capable craftsman of no intellectual stature. The *Resurrection*, with its beautiful effects of light, bold cropping of the figures, and asymmetrical composition encapsulates Sano's achievement at this time. Some of the compositional features certainly derive from the predella panel by the Master of the Osservanza (cat. 12 d), the aesthetic merits of which Sano was incapable of equaling, but the curvilinear structure of his picture reveals an awareness of Sassetta's most recent experiments in a neo-Gothic mode of painting that was, in a debased form, to dominate Sano's subsequent production.

KC



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Resurrection*.
Collection George A. Douglass, Riverside, Connecticut





17. Madonna of Mercy

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 83 × 59.3 cm. The panel has not been thinned. With the exception of the molding along the bottom, the frame is original.

This beautifully preserved picture—like an effulgent icon—is unquestionably one of the finest small-scale works by Sano di Pietro. It shows the Virgin clad in a resplendent white dress—richly decorated with a blue-and-red pattern—the hemline of which breaks into arabesques on the plain floor. A group of diminutive Poor Clares and novices kneel together beneath the protective covering of the Virgin's green-lined mantle, held like a tent above them. Each of the figures holds a rosary in her clasped hands and raises her eyes expectantly to the somewhat plebeian-featured Virgin, whose hieratic pose and impassive gaze seem to consciously evoke an image like the Ducciesque *Madonna of Mercy* from Ver-tine (for which, see fig. 1, and Bagnoli 1985, pp. 43–46), now in the Siena Pinacoteca. This is quite unlike the treatment of the theme by Domenico di Bartolo (cat. 42) and that by Vecchietta in the Palazzo Pubblico. They used the subject as an opportunity for displaying a command of foreshortening and spatial projection.

It is surprising that this exceptional picture has been completely overlooked by critics. Conceivably, it was painted for the same convent of Poor Clares, San Niccolò, for which Sano later illuminated a well-known breviary (the church was patronized by the Petroni family). According to a label on the reverse side of the panel, it was exhibited at the Collegio Tolomei in Siena from August 12 to 23, 1870. Samuel Parrish (*Parrish Art Museum Catalogue*, 1898, pp. 96–97) purchased it in Florence in 1896 as a work by Sano di Pietro. At that time, the panel was mounted with an unrelated predella, possibly by Giovanni del Biondo (the attribution was suggested by Miklòs Boskovits), which was subsequently removed (the modern bottom molding was added at that time). The picture was sold in 1962 and has since been exhibited only once, in the “Exhibition of Old Masters” at Heli-kon, London (June–September 1974).

The kneeling nuns are analogous to the audience listening raptly to Saint Bernardino preaching in the two great panels Sano painted between 1444 and 1450 (now in the chapter room of the cathedral), and are similar to the figures in the predella of the Scrofiano altarpiece, dated 1449 (Siena Pinacoteca). The pattern on the Virgin's dress is close to that in the *Assumption of the Virgin* in Altenburg (cat. 18 b), which is from a predella commissioned from Sano in 1448. Although the picture has been dated 1455–60 (Algranti 1974), a date in the late 1440s is probable.

KC

Sano di Pietro



Figure 1. Ducciesque Master. *Madonna of Mercy*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

THE CAPPELLA DE' SIGNORI PREDELLA (catalogue 18 a–c)

In the fourteenth century, the main chapel in the Palazzo Pubblico was located on the ground floor in an area directly accessible from the Piazza del Campo (today, the office of an assessor). An altarpiece by Duccio and a crucifix by Simone Martini were commissioned for the chapel in 1302 and 1321, respectively. When, however, the entire lower floor was converted to offices in the early fifteenth century, a new chapel, the Cappella de' Signori, was constructed on the second floor, adjacent to the Sala del Mappamondo. This chapel is still intact, and constitutes one of the most suggestive Late Gothic ambi-ents in Italy. Construction was completed in 1406, when Taddeo di Bartolo was hired to decorate the walls and the vaults with an extensive cycle of frescoes depicting the Annunciation and the events surrounding the death of the Virgin. Below the frescoes was a lavish set of intarsia choir stalls with depictions of the Creed above their backrests. Built between 1415 and 1428, they were the work of Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori, who seems also to have created the elaborate lamp suspended from the ceiling (Bagnoli 1987, pp. 124–26). A holy-water font designed by Giovanni di Turino was installed prior to 1438, and in 1445, the arched entrance to the chapel was closed off by a remarkable, richly ornamented wrought-iron grille. Attention then turned to the altarpiece, which is described in a document of 1448 as venerable but structurally unsound (“posset de facili ruere”: Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 162; Eisenberg 1981, p. 147). To rectify this situation, a carpenter, Giovanni di Magno, was hired to supply a new armature and an inlaid walnut frame that would relate the work to the choir stalls (“fare l’altare di nuovo cioè tutto l’armadura d’esso . . . con tutte cornici grandi e piccole bisognevoli . . . lavorati di belle et gentili tarsie, conferenti a quell’altre cornici o tarsie che sonno nel coro o vero uscio che lavoro m[aestro] Domenico in detta cappella”; Milanesi 1854, II, pp. 256–57; Eisenberg 1981, p. 147). In addition, the altarpiece was to be provided with a predella painted by Sano di Pietro and was to be protected by a wooden canopy, the underside of which was to have gold stars on a blue ground, probably similar in design to that shown in the background of Domenico di Bartolo’s fresco of almsgiving in the Pellegrinaio of the Spedale della Scala.

Although a number of authors (see, for example, Southard 1979, pp. 349–52) assumed that the entire altarpiece was painted by Sano, the contract makes it quite clear that the earlier altarpiece was salvaged. It may, indeed, have been partly in consideration of the date of that altarpiece that Sano was specifically instructed to depict four scenes from the Life of the Virgin, “similar to those on the façade of the Spedale della Scala,” with

an additional scene of the Assumption of the Virgin at the center (“vi si debba fare cinque storie di nostra donna alla similtudine di quelle che sonno a capo le porti dello spedale della scala, mettendo in mezo l’assumpti-one”). The reference is to the famous cycle of frescoes, no longer extant, carried out in the first half of the fourteenth century by the Lorenzetti and by Simone Martini. They illustrated the Birth of the Virgin, the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, the Marriage of the Virgin, and the Virgin Returning to the Home of Her Parents. The identity of the last scene is not altogether certain: Ghiberti (about 1447, 1947 ed., p. 39) described it in the mid-fifteenth century as the Virgin visited by many maidens; Vasari (1906 ed., I, p. 522) was no less ambiguous, referring to it as Mary going to the Temple, accompanied by other Virgins. (For a summary of surviving descriptions of the frescoes and a discussion of their attribution, see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 70–72.) These frescoes established the iconographic model for numerous later Sienese paintings, including a predella by Giovanni di Paolo, two scenes of which are in the Galleria Doria-Pamphili in Rome. Sano’s dependence on these frescoes was not unusual, but the document establishes that, in this case, the decision to have recourse to an earlier, celebrated work was motivated by the conservatism of his patrons.

Sano’s predella, three scenes of which are included here, has been identified with the *Birth of the Virgin* in the Museum of Art at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (cat. 18 a), the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* in the Pinacoteca Vaticana (fig. 1), the *Assumption of the Virgin* in the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg (cat. 18 b), the *Marriage of the Virgin* in the Pinacoteca Vaticana (fig. 2), and the *Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents* also in the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum (cat. 18 c). The Altenburg panels were purchased in Italy prior to 1848 (Oertel 1961, p. 97), and it is conceivable that those in the Vatican were acquired in 1837 (Eisenberg 1981, p. 139, n. 20); the painting in Michigan can be traced to the early nineteenth century (Eisenberg 1981, p. 136, n. 19). Their association with the Cappella de’ Signori predella is based on the coincidence of their subjects and their compositions with those of the hospital frescoes. Indeed, one of their most appealing characteristics is the manner in which the schemes of the monumental frescoes have been adapted to the format of small, oblong panels executed in the bright, decorative palette of an artist with an instinctive gift for narrative detail. In the Vatican *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, for example, the domed roof that seems to have been an outstanding feature of the Lorenzetti prototype—it appears in Lippo Vanni’s fresco at San Leonardo al Lago as well as in a predella panel by Giovanni di Paolo in the Siena Pinacoteca—was eliminated, the number of steps

reduced, the building extended laterally, and a molding with Gothic tracery added on the interior wall. What must have been a compact group of figures in the Lorenzetti are strung across the foreground and linked together loosely by a sequence of tilting gestures. The subjects of Sano's predella, elaborately representing the Life of the Virgin prior to the Annunciation, but including her Assumption, were chosen to complement Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoed scenes of the *Death of the Virgin* on a lateral wall and the *Annunciation* and *Coronation of the Virgin* on the end wall. The *Coronation of the Virgin* (no longer extant) was located beneath an arched recess above the canopy constructed to protect the altarpiece (Eisenberg 1981, p. 140).

No less important than creating a coherent iconography was the concern by the consistory that the form of the fourteenth-century altarpiece and the predella be brought into harmony with the newly completed furnishings of the chapel. Not only do the documents specify the exceptional use of an intarsia rather than a gilt frame to enclose the altarpiece, but they pointedly mention that above and below the work there were to be dentiled moldings—the one above adorned with inlaid patterns—in precise conformity with Domenico di Niccolò's choir stalls. The beauty of the finished complex depended in no small measure on the contrast between the richness of the carved and inlaid walnut framework and the gilt backgrounds and the frames of the individual panels of the altarpiece ("... tutti e campi e cornici messi d'oro fino ...").

Although work was to be completed by the end of July 1449—in time for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin on August 15—it dragged on, with interruptions, until 1452; final payment was only made to Sano di Pietro and Giovanni di Magno on October 31, 1452. None of the documents mentions either the author or the subject of the main panels of the altarpiece, which was replaced in 1616 with a marble tabernacle and a painting by Sodoma transferred from the cathedral. However, in 1625–26, Chigi (f. 214 v) recorded that the altarpiece was painted by Simone Martini, and this information was amplified by Pecci (1730, II, pp. 200–201) and della Valle (1785, II, p. 88), who attest that the work was a polyptych ("ritagliata a piramidi," according to della Valle), showing the Madonna and Child with saints. Simone is known to have painted an altarpiece in 1326 for the Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo and it is conceivable that this work was moved to the Palazzo Pubblico in the fifteenth century. Ghiberti (*idem*) mentions an altarpiece by Simone in the Palazzo Pubblico. However, the matter remains highly conjectural. There is no evidence that the altarpiece in question was as elaborate as that postulated by Eisenberg (1981).¹ Neither is the information sufficient to dismiss the proposal of Boskovits (1974, p. 376) identifying

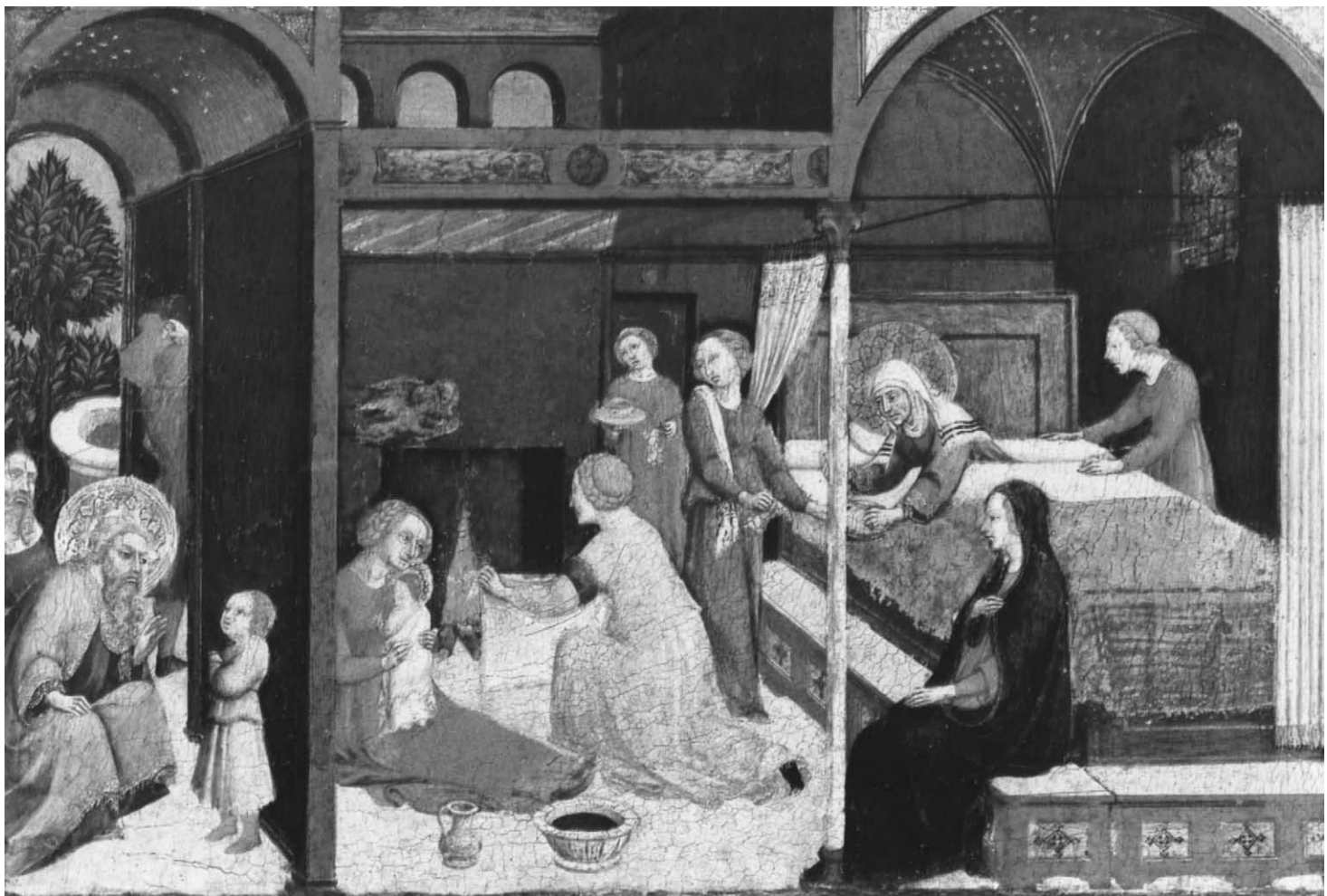


Figure 1. Sano di Pietro. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City



Figure 2. Sano di Pietro. *The Marriage of the Virgin*. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

Simone's altarpiece with a series of five panels divided between The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, and a private collection. Exceptionally, the center panel of this series, which includes figures of the patron saint of Siena, Ansanus, and of Saint Luke, to whom, according to Gigli (1723, II, pp. 257–58),



the Cappella de' Signori was first dedicated, has the same dimensions as the lateral panels. The width of the individual panels, including their original frames, is approximately 48 cm. This coincides with the width of the predella panels, inclusive of the bare extension of wood that would have been covered by an engaged, gilt molding. The tooling of the gold backgrounds of Sano's predella is also remarkably similar to that employed by Simone. According to della Valle, the altarpiece was dismantled and its various parts distributed among rooms in the Palazzo Pubblico, but even this information is vague and should not be taken as fact.

KC

1. It should be noted that the translations of the documents republished by Eisenberg are highly misleading and sometimes incorrect. There is no concrete evidence for his assumption that the altarpiece resembled Simone Martini's multistoried polyptych in Pisa. The shallow niche that surrounded the altarpiece certainly did not include the decorative borders with adoring angels, which are later (probably seventeenth century).

18 a. The Birth of the Virgin

Museum of Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Tempera and gold on wood. 31.8 × 47.2 cm.; painted surface 30.3 × 45.8 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. The original edge of the somewhat worn paint surface is intact.

The subject of the Birth of the Virgin is mentioned only in passing in *The Golden Legend*, but the feast was celebrated in the Western Church by the eleventh century. A fairly standard iconography evolved in which Saint Anne, a descendant of King David, is shown in a well-furnished house attended by servants, some of whom prepare the newborn Virgin for a bath. In his altarpiece of 1342 for the cathedral of Siena, Pietro Lorenzetti divided the episode into thirds, with the bedchamber occupying the right two-thirds of the scene, while in the left third Joachim is seated in a corridor, the news of the Virgin's birth being conveyed to him by a young servant. The same general format seems to have characterized the fresco on the

hospital façade from which Sano's scene derives, the major difference being that in the fresco the bed was foreshortened in depth rather than set parallel to the picture plane. The fresco is attributed by a variety of early sources to Ambrogio Lorenzetti; Ugurgieri (1649, pp. 336–38) records that it was dated 1335 (see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 70–72).

Together with Pietro Lorenzetti's altarpiece, Ambrogio's fresco became one of the most influential compositions of the fourteenth century, and it is by comparing Sano's depiction with other representations that derive from the fresco that it is possible to judge how closely he followed Ambrogio's model. One of the earliest of these is a fresco by Bartolo di Fredi in the church of Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano, in which Saint Anne's bed, surrounded by chests, is similarly foreshortened; Saint Anne is shown turning toward a servant to wash her hands; a second maid, her legs extended, is seated on the floor holding the standing infant on her lap; and a third servant carrying food enters the room through a door in the back wall. The same features, with Joachim receiving news of the birth in an adjacent room to the left, are repeated in a predella panel by Bartolo di Fredi in the Siena Pinacoteca—part of an altarpiece painted in 1388 for the church of San Francesco in Montalcino (see Freuler 1985, pp. 22–26). The most significant fifteenth-century variant of Ambrogio's fresco was the altarpiece of the Birth of the Virgin painted in the 1440s by the Master of the Osservanza for the Collegiata of Asciano. There, the perspective of the room is centralized, the position of the servant with the infant Mary is reversed, and another servant is shown drying a linen cloth before a fireplace in the side wall. The last motif was probably included in the Lorenzetti fresco as well. In any case, there can be little doubt that Sano's scene—with the broken elevation of the building, which recedes to the left; the deep corridor, in which a man is viewed from behind as he enters the house with provisions; and the carefully diminished size of the two standing servants—depends closely on Ambrogio's lost masterpiece, the solemn mood of which Sano has attempted to convey with his small, doll-like figures.

The picture, which bears on its reverse the wax seal of the early-nineteenth-century conservator of the Camposanto in Pisa, Cav. Carlo Lasinio, was subsequently owned by Lord Northwick (sale, Thirlestane House, July 26, 1859, no. 1639); it was identified by Zeri (1964, p. 47) as part of the Cappella de' Signori predella (see Eisenberg 1981, pp. 136–39, n. 19).

KC

18 b. The Assumption of the Virgin

Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg

Tempera and gold on wood. 31.5 × 47.2 cm.; painted surface 30.3 × 45.7 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. The original edge of the painted surface is intact.

The feast of the Assumption of the Virgin on August 15 was the occasion of elaborate celebrations in Siena, which was under the special protection of the Virgin. The most important feature of these festivities, which took place over a three-day period, was a ceremonial procession to the cathedral for the offering of candles and tribute money, but this event was preceded on the eve of the feast by a dinner in the Palazzo Pubblico for civic officials and guests. The stipulation made by the consistory in 1448 that the altarpiece for the Cappella de' Signori be installed by the end of July of the following year, and that the center scene of the predella show the Assumption of the Virgin, is directly related to these events.

In accordance with a well-established tradition, perhaps best exemplified by the center panel of an altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca painted in the third quarter of the fourteenth century by Bartolomeo Bulgarini for the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala, the Virgin is shown clad in a white-and-gold patterned cloak, seated frontally in a mandorla of cherubim and seraphim. To either side are tiers of music-making angels and, at the base, isolated in front of the empty tomb, is the standing figure of Saint Thomas staring upward toward the Virgin's girdle (he had not personally witnessed the Virgin's Assumption and was furnished the girdle so that he might believe). These compositional features recur in a more complicated *Assumption of the Virgin* by Sano in the Siena Pinacoteca, datable to the 1440s. In the predella panel the scheme is greatly simplified. The elegant, dance-like postures of the outermost angels and the arrangement of the upper two tiers derive from Sassetta's altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin left unfinished at his death in 1450 (formerly in Berlin; destroyed in World War II). The landscape at the bottom of the panel, with its undulating hills dotted with trees, seems to reflect a composition by the Master of the Osservanza (see cat. 11). Sano has, however, further enriched his scene at either side of the hill with partial views of a city very like Siena. This is doubtless an allusion to that city's dedication to the Virgin and to her principal feast.

Sano repeated the basic features of the composition in the predella of his altarpiece in the Collegiata in San Quirico d'Orcia datable to the 1460s, in which, however, the event appears in chronological sequence rather than as the central episode.

KC



18 b

18 c. The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents

Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg

Tempera and gold on wood. 32 × 47.5 cm.; painted surface 30.3 × 45.8 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain. The original paint edge is intact on all sides.

According to the apocryphal Gospel of the Birth of Mary (6:7), following the Virgin's betrothal to Joseph, "the Virgin of the Lord, Mary, with seven other virgins of the same age [fourteen years] who had been weaned at the same time, and who had been appointed to attend her by the priest, returned to her parents' house in Galilee." Essentially the same story is repeated in *The Golden Legend*. In the picture, the young Virgin, followed by her companions, is greeted by her parents, Anna and Joachim, at

the entrance to her home. The woman with a halo, at the extreme left, is likely to be Mary's cousin Elizabeth, the mother of Saint John the Baptist. Brandi (1949, p. 257, fig. 115) first correctly identified the subject, which is rarely depicted. It was, however, almost certainly the scene on the façade of the Spedale della Scala described by Ghiberti (about 1447, 1947 ed., p. 39) as showing the Virgin "visited by many women" and attributed by him to Simone Martini. Chigi (1625–26, f. 209 r) records that Simone painted this and another scene of the Marriage of the Virgin in 1340 (see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 72–73). The subject is included in Bartolo di Fredi's altarpiece for the church of San Francesco in Montalcino (see Freuler 1985, pp. 22–26), in the fresco cycle by Benedetto di Bindo in the sacristy of the cathedral (for which, see Mongellaz 1985), as well as in a predella series in the



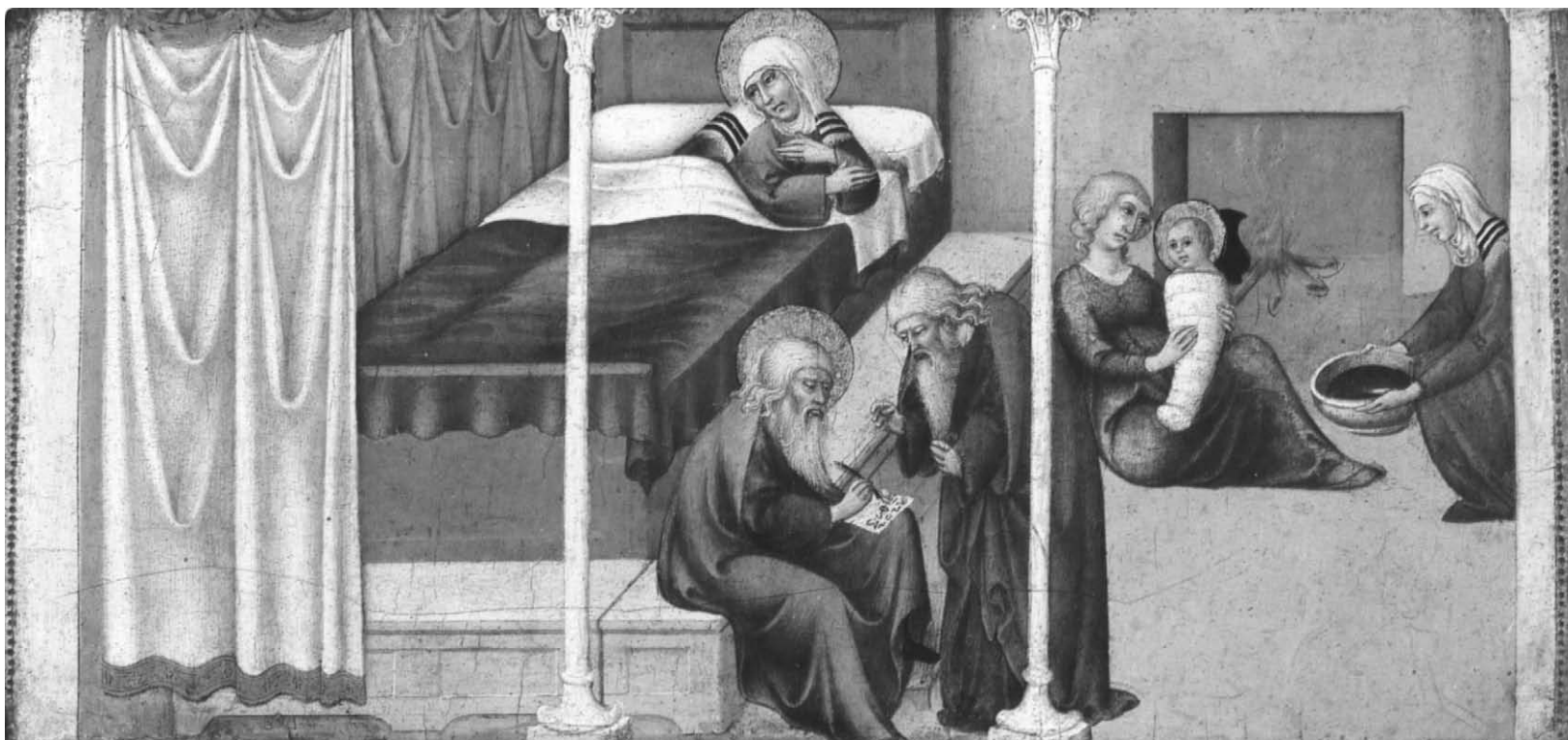
18 c

Vatican, by a contemporary of Sano's, which treats the same four events depicted in the Cappella de' Signori predella, although in a more abbreviated fashion and with varying pictorial sources (the *Birth of the Virgin* derives from Pietro Lorenzetti's altarpiece in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena).

Simone Martini's participation in the fresco cycle on the Spedale has been questioned (see, for example, Rowley 1958, pp. 85–88, who misinterprets the scene), but the various sources seem to leave little room for doubt that only two scenes were painted by the Lorenzetti brothers and the other two by Simone. An analogy for the group of figures ranged in procession in front of a wall is provided by a scene of a miracle of the Blessed Agostino Novello by Simone (on deposit in the Siena Pinacoteca). Benedetto di Bindo's fresco in the sacristy of the cathedral

establishes that the crenellated wall; the arched door at the right, with its beams shown in strong recession; and the arched portico appeared in the Spedale scene. Vasari's confusion as to the identity of the subject (1878–85, I, p. 522), which he describes as the Virgin going to the Temple with other Virgins, confirms that the temple and campanile seen in the background of Sano's predella panel probably also derive from Simone's fresco; Gallavotti Cavallero (1987, p. 49) has suggested that actual structures in the hospital complex may be shown. The highly decorative use of color, the over-sized peacock, and the delicate Gothic tracery on the buildings are, by contrast, characteristic features of Sano's work in the 1440s, and they transform what must have been a scene of splendid formality into one of domestic charm.

KC



19. The Birth and Naming of Saint John the Baptist

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.5 × 47.9 cm.; painted surface (excluding vertical gilt borders) 20.7 × 42.9 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has not been thinned. The engaged frame is modern.

The picture combines two episodes: the birth of Saint John the Baptist, who is being held by a nurse in the rear of the simple, rectangular room, and his naming by Zacharias, who writes on a tablet in pseudo-Hebrew in the foreground. The scene is remarkable not only for the delicacy of execution—epitomized by the beautifully rendered folds of the foreshortened curtain—but for the economic and highly effective treatment of space, defined by the bold, diagonal recession of Saint Elizabeth's bed. This motif seems to have been a primary feature of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's destroyed fresco of the *Birth of the Virgin* on the façade of the Spedale della Scala, which Sano freely copied in his predella of 1448–51 for the altarpiece in the Cappella de' Signori of the Palazzo Pubblico (cat. 18 a). That panel shares a number of features with the present scene, although in reverse: the picture plane is defined by a thin colonnette; the bed, surrounded

by a chest, extends the full depth of the room; the back wall is punctuated by a rectangular fireplace; and a figure (a woman rather than Zacharias) is seated on the chest at the foot of the bed. It is doubtful that Sano could have arrived at so coherent a composition without having studied Ambrogio's fresco.

The provenance of the picture cannot be traced prior to 1878, when it belonged to the Earl of Ashburnham (according to a letter of October 1927 to the Frick Art Reference Library, Frank Channing Smith of Worcester, Massachusetts, acquired the panel in 1920). The attribution to Sano has never been questioned (Gaillard 1923, p. 204; van Marle 1927, IX, p. 530, n. 2; Berenson 1932, p. 505, and 1968, p. 377) and a date in the early 1450s—immediately following the Palazzo Pubblico predella and that of the 1449 Scrofano altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca—is probable (Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 142). It is perhaps worth pointing out that although no other panels may, with certainty, be associated with this one, the difference between the tooling on the two vertical borders of the panel strongly suggests that this was the left-hand scene of a dispersed predella, which may well have comprised a cycle of the Life of the Baptist (Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 142).

KC



20. Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to Life

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 21.6 × 40.2 cm. The panel, which has not been thinned, is 3.8 cm. thick, and has a horizontal grain. The original paint edges are intact, and there are traces of gilt vertical borders.

The miracle has been identified with the resuscitation of ten-year-old Carino of Aquila, who, upon falling into a millpond, invoked the saint, and was retrieved and brought back to life (AA.SS. Maii, v, p. 143, no. 25; see Pavone and Pacelli 1981, p. 34). The miracle was a popular one. It was treated by Sano di Pietro in a panel in the Rucellai collection, Florence (see cat. 24), as well as by Matteo di Giovanni (cat. 50 b). The present panel is earlier than the Rucellai scene—it dates from the early 1450s, shortly after Bernardino's canonization—and its composition is more sophisticated. The two episodes of the miracle are arranged diagonally in space rather than across the front of the picture plane. The focus of interest is the child offering thanks to Saint Bernardino, who appears in the sky holding a blue orb.

The painting was purchased for the Ashburnham collection prior to 1878 (sale, Sotheby's, London, June 24, 1953, no. 12). It has, incorrectly, been considered a com-

panion picture to two later scenes of Saint Bernardino (cat. 24 a, b: *Master Paintings*, Thomas Agnew & Sons Ltd., London, May 18–June 18, 1976, no. 32); those seem to have formed a predella with the Rucellai panels. No other predella panels can be associated with this very beautiful picture, nor, given the frequency with which Sano portrayed Saint Bernardino, can any altarpieces. Another more-or-less contemporary scene, *The Birth and Naming of Saint John the Baptist* (cat. 19) was also owned by the Earl of Ashburnham, but its tooled borders make it an unlikely companion to the present panel.

Despite the imaginative treatment of the miracle by separating the two episodes spatially, it is, as Pope-Hennessy (1947, p. 10) noted, the simple faith conjured up by Sano that persuades. Few contrasts are more telling than that between Sano's relatively straightforward approach and his reliance on the medieval device of continuous narration and Matteo di Giovanni's depiction, with its emphasis on the dramatic rather than the hagiologic content of the event. This is partly due to a difference in artistic temperament, but it also reflects the proximity of Sano's scene to the actual event and the widespread excitement attending news of each new miracle. There had never been any doubt that Bernardino would be the source of miracles and that he would

be quickly canonized, and in anticipation of this eventuality a number of the confraternities and religious establishments that had had close ties to him made special provisions. It was probably for one such institution that Sano's altarpiece was commissioned. For example, on September 12, 1444, just four months after Bernardino's death, the Compagnia di San Girolamo sotto le Volte at the Spedale della Scala decided to mark their long-standing association with the holy man by proclaiming him their protector: "When he is canonized we shall pray to him in the offices as to Saint Jerome and Saint Francis" (A.S.S., Patrimonio Resti 906 f. 3 v). The commune was no less anxious for Bernardino's elevation, and when, on June 10, an account of his first miracles was received from Aquila, where the saint had died, it was read aloud to the people assembled. Sano's picture is conceived in this spirit, and it should be read as an illustration to these popular reports rather than as a conceptualized artistic statement of an official biography.

KC

21. Antiphonary

Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna (Ms. 562)

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 70 × 49.5 cm. The Antiphonary consists of 1 + 170 + 1 folios (the first folio is a later addition), and covers the liturgical calendar from Christmas through the last Sunday after Epiphany. There are three large illuminations by Sano di Pietro, each measuring about 20 × 15 cm.: f. 5 v (the *Nativity*), f. 54 v (*Saint John on Patmos*), and f. 120 v (the *Baptism of Christ*). In addition, there is a historiated initial on f. 32 v with the *Stoning of Saint Stephen*, and a decorated letter on f. 76 v by another hand.

Between 1459 and 1463, Sano di Pietro was employed illuminating a Psalter for the Benedictine monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, southeast of Siena, as part of a project comprising a set of twenty-two choir books (for the payments to Sano, see Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 210; Mazzoni 1982, p. 489). Sano's work is contained in three codices now in the Museo della Cattedrale, Chiusi (codices U, V, and X: see Mazzoni 1982, pp. 454–502). The abbot general of Monte Oliveto was Francesco Ringhieri, a Bolognese, and this doubtless accounts for the prominent role later played by the North Italian artists Liberale da Verona, Girolamo da Cremona, and Venturino Mercati in the production of the choir books—although Francesco di Giorgio also illuminated an initial (see cat. 66). The present Antiphonary seems to have been made for the sister community of San Michele al Bosco in Bologna

(Milanesi 1873, p. 75), and it has reasonably been surmised that Sano's miniatures were commissioned while he was employed by the Bolognese abbot at Monte Oliveto (Gaillard 1923, pp. 131–38).

Although the commission was probably an extension of his work at Monte Oliveto, the three miniatures he produced are unique in having been conceived as individual framed pictures rather than as decorated initials. They illustrate responses for Christmas ("Hodie nobis coelorum Rex de Virgine nasci dignatus est . . ."); for the feast of Saint John the Evangelist ("Valde honorandus est beatus Joannes . . ."); and for the first Sunday after Epiphany ("Hodie in Jordane batezato Domino aperti sunt celi . . ."). In each, the rectangular borders—interrupted at the top of the *Baptism of Christ* by a low arch—are in the form of illusionistic moldings lit from the left, as in the *Crucifixion* ascribed to Sassetta (cat. 5), the cutting by the Master of the Osservanza (cat. 9 a), and the *Creation* by Pellegrino di Mariano (cat. 39 c). This type of border can be traced to fourteenth-century murals; in the corners of those of the *Baptism of Christ* and the *Saint John on Patmos* there are small interlace designs of the type associated with humanistic manuscripts.

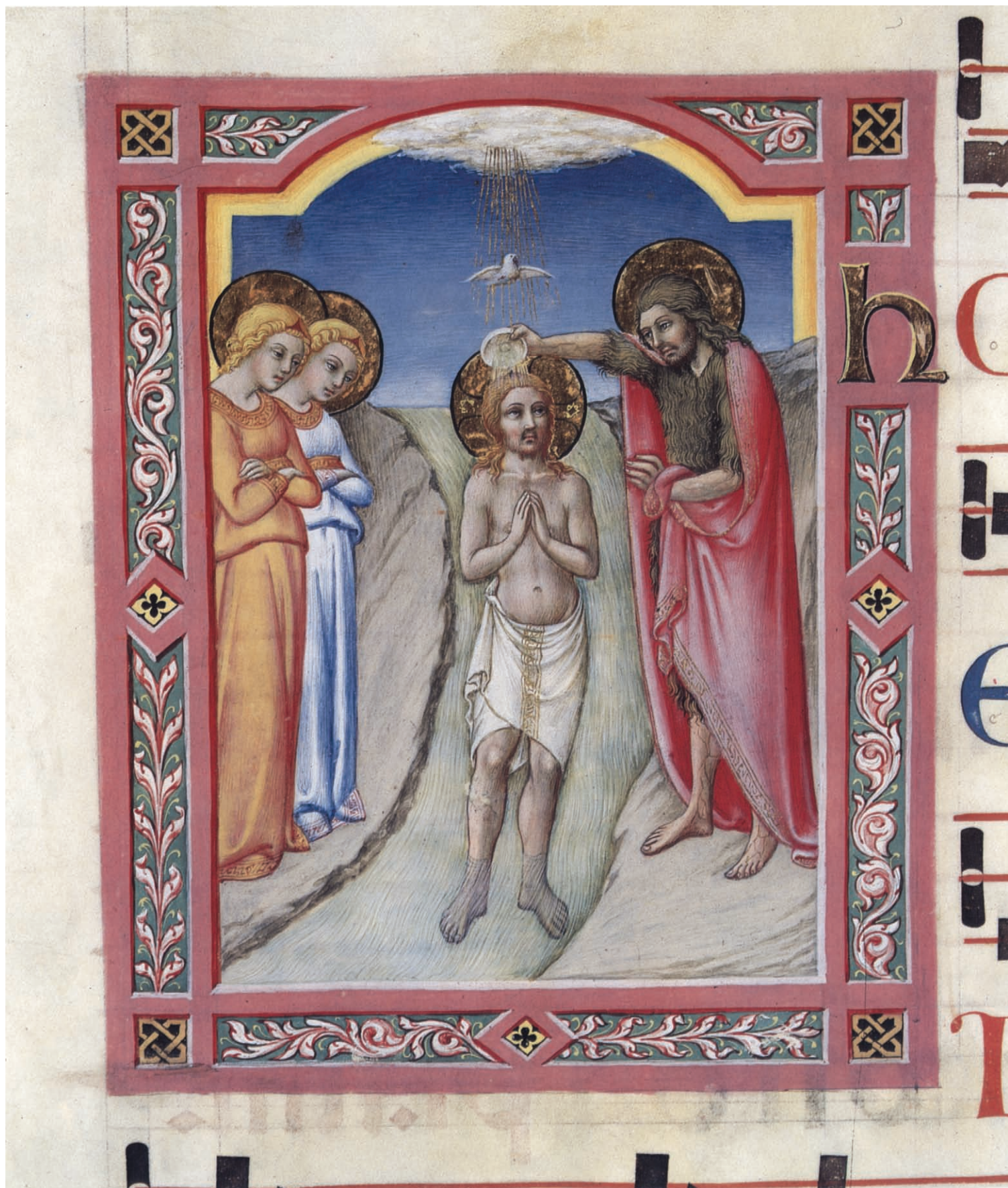
The composition of the *Nativity* conforms to traditional representations of the subject in Siena: The event takes place before a sharply cut, peaked cave opening, with the Virgin and Saint Joseph kneeling in adoration to either side of the Christ Child, whose naked body is surrounded by an aureole of gold rays that illuminate the interior with a brilliant yellow light, in conformity with the vision of Saint Bridget of Sweden. The composition



21: f. 32 v







was adapted with little variation to the irregular picture field of an initial *H* in an Antiphonary illuminated about 1462 by Sano for Pius II's new cathedral at Pienza (codex 62, f. 72 v, in the Museo Diocesano: see Damiani 1984, p. 163). The distinguishing features of the Bologna miniature, which ranks among Sano's masterpieces, are the strict geometry of the composition, the carefully described poses of the figures, and the refined execution.

Perhaps the most ambitious of the three miniatures, in which Sano's desire to create an effect of monumentality is most nearly achieved, is the depiction of the aged Saint John composing his revelations on the island of Patmos, where he was exiled by the Emperor Domitian. The saint looks up across a limitless golden expanse toward the dove of the Holy Spirit, the cloak draped over his crossed legs filling the lower part of the composition. At his side is his symbol, the eagle, while behind him is a seascape with two ships, backed by a range of mountains, recalling in its poetic effect the scene by the Master of the Osservanza of *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold* (cat. 10 f). This remarkable miniature served as a model for Pellegrino di Mariano's later illumination in one of the choir books for the cathedral of Siena (codex 2B, f. 54 v: in the Piccolomini Library).

The composition of the *Baptism of Christ*, the third of Sano's miniatures, differs both from its contemporary treatment by Sano in the Psalter for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (codex V, f. 35 v: in the Museo della Cattedrale, Chiusi), and from a miniature in the Pienza Antiphonary in the sculptural treatment of the figures, who stand on a common ground plane, and in the emphasis on expression. The manner in which Saint John the Baptist empties his cup over Christ's head may well be inspired by Ghiberti's bronze relief for the Siena Baptistery font, and the shallow landscape cut by the arching river would seem to derive from this same source.

Whether the stimulus for these miniatures was provided by the experiments of a younger generation of artists in applying sculptural principles to pictorial compositions is perhaps less pertinent than Sano's revival of a formal vocabulary strongly reminiscent of fourteenth-century painting to achieve a calculated (rather than a casual) simplicity of effect that is the basis of his best work, and which must have recommended him to the conservative taste of many monastic patrons.

Gaillard (1923, pp. 135–36) tentatively identified the artist responsible for the historiated initial on f. 32 v as Pellegrino di Mariano. He seems, rather, to be Venturino Mercati, who was employed at Monte Oliveto Maggiore between 1472–73 and 1476–79, and to whom a number of miniatures may be attributed with confidence (see Mavarelli 1982, pp. 328–33; Eberhardt 1983, pp. 58–59, 175–77, 191–93).

22. The Initial *D*, with The Torture of Saint Agatha (cutting from an Antiphonary)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on vellum. 26 × 25.3 cm.

The illumination illustrates the text ("Dum torqueretur beata Agatha . . .") of a response for February 5, the feast day of Saint Agatha, which describes how, while Agatha was being tortured by the consul of Sicily who had unsuccessfully tried to woo the Christian virgin, she retorted: "Cruel and impious tyrant, does it not shame you to amputate from a woman that with which your mother suckled you?"

This must be the illumination that Perkins described in 1920, praising it as the finest miniature by Sano he had ever seen (Gaillard 1923, pp. 122–23, n. 1). In 1914, it was owned by M. Drey in Munich, and then by Grassi in Florence (*idem*). It was purchased for the Lehman collection in 1937 from Frederik Muller & Cie., Amsterdam. While there is no indication of its earlier provenance, this exceptionally fine miniature may well be from the same set of choir books as the miniatures in the following three entries, which were illuminated by Sano for the Spedale della Scala. It is perhaps worth noting that an Antiphonary in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (codex 90.L) covering the liturgical year from the feast of Saint Agatha to that of Saint Michael (September 29) has been deprived of its decorated pages, including f. 3—to which this would be an appropriate illustration. The Antiphonary is undated, but was probably illuminated between 1456 and 1476 (see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 231, for a description of the contents).

The pose of the seated consul is related, in reverse, to that of Christ in the *Flagellation of Saint Jerome* from the predella of the Gesuati altarpiece in the Louvre. The contrapposto stance of Saint Agatha, exemplifying her stoic acceptance of the torture, is, by contrast, a novel and extremely beautiful invention, underscoring Sano's narrative gifts.

KC





**23 a. The Initial A, with The Vision of Isaiah
(page from an Antiphony)**

James D. Ireland, Cleveland

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 51.6 × 36.7 cm.

The text, "Aspiciens a longe ecce video Dei potentiam venientem," is from a response for the first Sunday in Advent.

The page was exhibited as a work by Sano di Pietro at the University Art Museum, Berkeley, in 1963 (no. 52: lent by Mr. and Mrs. William Mather), and again in 1968–69 ("Medieval Art from Private Collections," The Cloisters, New York, October 30, 1968–March 30, 1969, no. 9). It would appear to come from the same set of choir books as the following two pages.

KC

**23 b. The Initial D, with The Last Judgment
(page from an Antiphony)**

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 56 × 38 cm.; initial 22.8 × 20.3 cm.

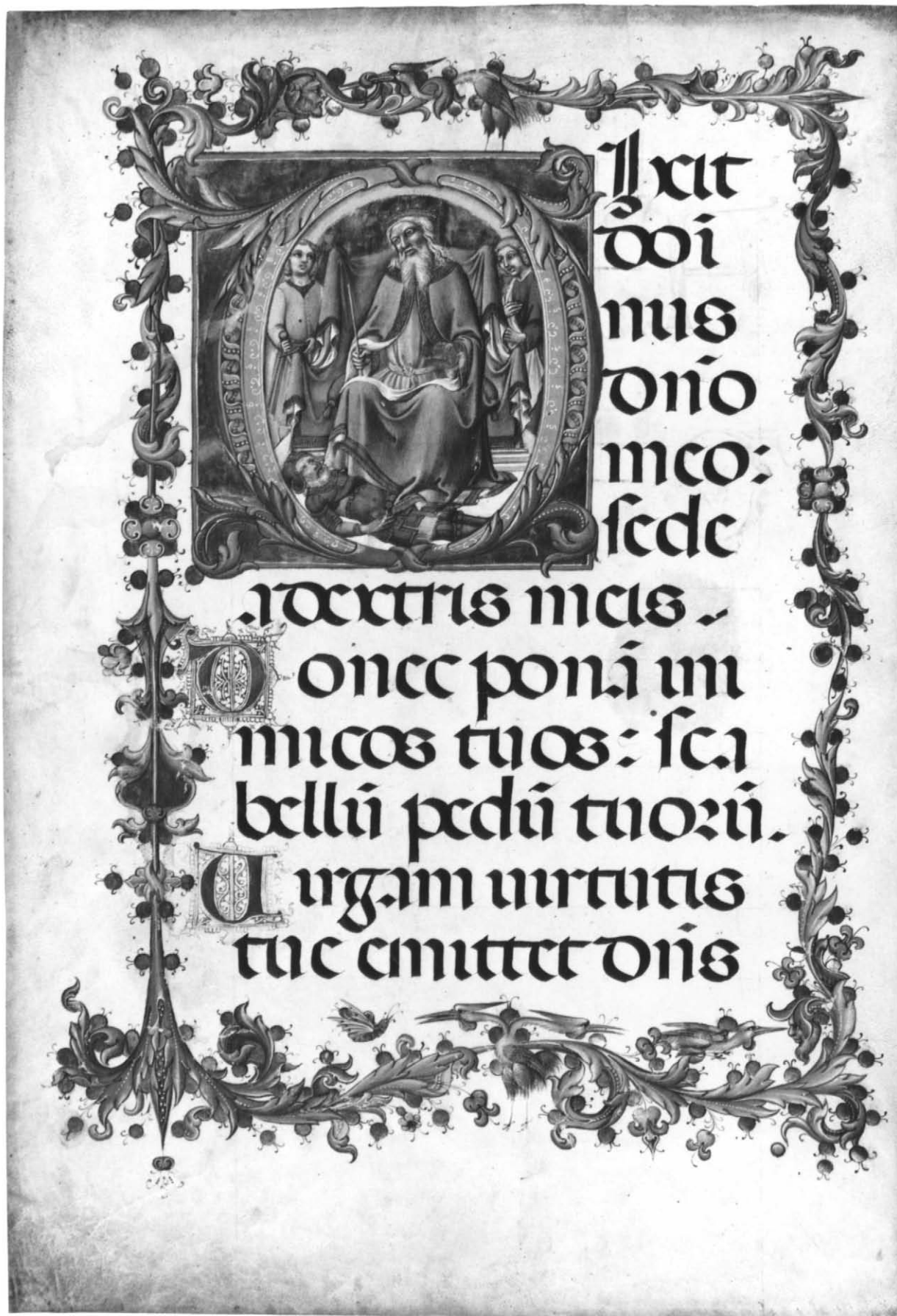
The text, "Domine ne in ira tua arguas me" ("O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure": Psalm 6:1), is from a response for the second Sunday after Epiphany.

According to Avril (1983, p. 351), the page was owned by William Young Ottley. It is not, however, readily identifiable among his miniatures in the sale at Sotheby's, London, May 11–12, 1838. The Fitzwilliam Museum purchased it in 1891. James (1895, pp. 402–3, nos. 196, 198) recognized the page as a companion to the illumination discussed in the following entry, and it was first published with a tentative attribution to Sano by Giles and Wormald (1966, p. 37, no. 87).

KC

23 b





23 c. The Initial *D*, with David Seated on a Throne (page from a Psalter)

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 58.5 × 40.5 cm.; initial 18.4 × 17.8 cm.

The text, “Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis: Donec ponam inimicos tuos, scabellum pedum tuorum,” is from Psalm 109 (110):1–2: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

As with the page in the preceding entry, a provenance from the collection of William Young Ottley cannot be stated with certainty. The miniature was purchased by the Fitzwilliam in 1891. James (1895, p. 403, no. 198) recognized it as a companion to catalogue 23 b. Avril (1983, p. 351) noted that although the two Fitzwilliam pages come from an Antiphonary and a Psalter, respectively, they certainly belonged to a single set of choir books. Catalogue 23 a is likely to be from the same set, which can be tentatively identified with the choir books Sano illuminated for the Spedale della Scala, which are now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo in Siena. These consist of three Graduals (codices 95.1, 96.2, 97.3) and a

Psalter (codex 107.13). Sano’s participation, however, may have been considerably more extensive than this list suggests, since various other choir books are missing a large number of pages, only some of which were recovered in London in 1869 and bound together (codex 124.3: see Alessi 1984, p. 195, n. 35; for a description of the codices, see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 225–28). The three pages by Pellegrino di Mariano (cat. 39 a–c) are from the same series of choir books, which seem to have been carried out under the rectorship of Niccolò Ricoveri (1456–76); according to an inscription, codex 95.1 would have been illuminated by Sano after 1462. The three Graduals are similar in style, size, and border decoration to catalogue 23 a, b. It is possible that a further page from an Antiphonary in the J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville (see fig. 1)—also illuminated by Sano—belongs with the group catalogued here. It contains a response for the feast of the Annunciation, which is illustrated in the initial *M* (48.2 × 38.1 cm.).

These three splendid pages amply testify to Sano’s gifts as a miniaturist and to the quality that his work, undiluted by workshop assistance, could attain—even after 1460. He seems to have especially responded to the irregular picture fields provided by Gothic letters, and his innate love for brilliant, contrasting colors found a natural outlet in these sumptuous pages flickering with an overall pattern of gold. At the same time, it would be wrong to treat these miniatures exclusively in terms of decoration, for their real strength is as representation: the wonderfully volumetric figure of Christ in the initial *D*—not unlike the Redeemer in the pinnacle of the Gesuati altarpiece—who hovers on a bank of clouds above a barren landscape, consigning the sinful to hell with an upraised arm while the blessed adore him with child-like ardor; the deep landscape viewed through the letter *A* as though through a Gothic portal, its zigzag path, trees, deer, and crane recalling the work of the Master of the Osservanza; and the imposing figure of David, shown glowering at the armed insurgent lying prostrate beneath his feet. In these images Sano has gone well beyond the simple task of the illustrator; he has embodied the text. The athletic putto who, in the border of catalogue 23 b, plays with a conventionalized crane, suggests Sano’s awareness of the work of a new generation of artists whose attention was directed to sculpture and to Florence.

KC



Figure 1. Sano di Pietro. *The Initial M, with The Annunciation* (page from an Antiphonary). J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville

THE SAINT BERNARDINO PREDELLA (catalogue 24 a, b)

The five—possibly six—panels that are here proposed as belonging to a single predella constitute the most extensive narrative cycle devoted to Saint Bernardino in fifteenth-century Siennese painting. Three of the scenes, in the Rucellai collection in Florence, depict, respectively: the saint's death, which took place in the Franciscan convent at Aquila on May 20, 1444; the miracle of the ten-year-old Carino saved from drowning in the mill-pond (see cat. 20); and the cure of Donna Perna on approaching Bernardino's body, which was removed from its coffin by the populace of Aquila and displayed for veneration (*Mostra Bernardiniana*, 1950, p. 80, nos. 69, 70; Kaftal 1952, col. 197). The other two scenes included here illustrate the miracle of a possessed woman exorcised at Bernardino's bier (b), and a drowned infant restored to life by the saint's posthumous intervention (a). The five scenes are related by style, dimensions (the Rucellai panels measure 25 × 40.5–41 cm. each), the tooled vertical borders visible on four of the scenes, and, most conspicuously, by their treatment of miracles that occurred immediately after the saint's death. These miracles were of particular importance in initiating the canonization proceedings, but they also relate to familiar ailments and dangers. The cumulative effect of the predella must have been an assertion of Bernardino's central place in the everyday lives of his contemporaries. Sano, of course, could have seen and heard Bernardino on a number of occasions, and his image of the saint's death and first

miracles was formed when these were lively topics of conversation in the streets of Siena.

Insofar as the order of the scenes is concerned, the *Death of Saint Bernardino* must have initiated the cycle; the miracle of Donna Perna, with its centralized setting, is likely to have occupied the middle; and the two demonstrably contiguous scenes shown here probably concluded the cycle. A panel of Saint Bernardino preaching in the Piazza del Campo in Siena (25 × 40 cm.), owned by Edward Hutton of London in 1957, is related in style and has been associated with the Rucellai pictures (Benson 1968, p. 376). While possible, the association is not certain: The subject bears no direct relationship to that of the other panels, and the figure scale is somewhat different.

Van Marle (1927, IX, p. 531) referred to each of the two scenes included here as "a late work of good quality." The series epitomizes the most appealing characteristics of Sano's late, almost artless style, in which hagiography is treated in terms of popular belief: unadorned, homely, and straightforward. As already remarked (cat. 20), this approach was peculiarly suited to the cult surrounding Saint Bernardino. It was, indeed, Sano who supplied the largest number of images of the saint to the various confraternities and Franciscan convents in southern Tuscany, including a processional banner to the Compagnia di San Bernardino in Siena in 1467–69.

The predella is datable to the 1470s. Although none of the panels can be traced earlier than the late nineteenth century, it is conceivable that they formed part of the altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca (no. 237) showing, in the center panel (136 cm. wide), the Madonna and Child with angels and Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret, and, in the two lateral panels (each 44 cm. wide), Saints Francis and Bernardino (fig. 1). The provenance of this altarpiece is not known (Brandi 1933, p. 254), although it surely came from a Franciscan establishment, and the association of the predella with it is purely hypothetical.

KC



Figure 1. Sano di Pietro. *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels, and Saints Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret, Francis, and Bernardino*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

24 a. Saint Bernardino Resuscitating a Drowned Child

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.8 × 39.8 cm.; painted surface (excluding vertical gold borders) 23 × 36.5 cm. The picture, painted on an unthinned panel 1.4 cm. thick, with a horizontal grain, retains its original, lipped edge at the top and bottom. The overpainted coat of arms to the right is illegible.

The picture illustrates a posthumous miracle of Saint Bernardino that took place in Aquila, where the saint died (AA.SS. Maii, v, p. 103, no. 35). An eighteen-month-old



24 a



24 b

infant named Amico had fallen into a barrel during his mother's absence and drowned. He was discovered half an hour later by the landlady, who noticed the child's clothes floating on the surface of the water ("pannos in tina supernatantes conspiciens accurrit"). The screams of the mother were heard by a devout man ("vir devotus et magna fide") who, upon arriving at the scene, implored the saint's intervention, whereupon the infant was restored to life.

Sano represents the incident with disarming simplicity and directness. The mother and her companion are shown bent over the barrel of water, beneath the surface of which the child is visible, and then again after Amico has been restored to life with the assistance of the devout man, who is depicted, hands clasped, descending the ample pink stairs at the right, approaching the barrel, and extending his arms toward the child. Only the kneeling mother seems aware of the diminutive, cloud-borne figure of Saint Bernardino.

The picture is a companion to the following panel, with which its border and illegible coat of arms align. Both were first ascribed to Sano by Berenson (1897, p. 177) when in the Lanckoronski collection, Vienna; the attribution to Sano has not been questioned (Berenson 1903 a, p. 177, 1932, p. 505, and 1968, p. 377; Gaillard 1923, p. 202; van Marle 1927, IX, p. 531; Pavone and Pacelli 1981, p. 34). They were exhibited at Thomas Agnew & Sons Ltd., London, October 13–November 20, 1954 (nos. 12, 14).

KC

24 b. A Possessed Woman Is Exorcised

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 25.2 × 40.9 cm.; painted surface (excluding the vertical gold borders) 23 × 38 cm. The picture is painted on a thinned, horizontal, grained panel 1 cm. thick; its original, lipped edges are intact at the top and bottom. The overpainted coat of arms to the left is illegible.

So great was Bernardino's popularity at his death that the ensuing struggle for the possession of his body is hardly surprising. His companions intended to take the simple coffin in which they had placed his remains back to Siena, but the citizens of Aquila prevented this, entering the convent, opening the coffin, and transporting the saint's body to the church, where it was displayed for veneration.

Among the first miracles to take place were those of a number of possessed women who were freed from devils after approaching the saint's body (AA.SS. Maii, v, p. 106, no. 50). Here, the possessed woman is shown twice:

from the back, kneeling at the saint's bier, and then supported by three male companions as a small devil wrenches itself free. To the left, other faithful arrive.

The same episode is the subject of a more-or-less contemporary predella panel by Neroccio de'Landi in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. By comparison with that more complicated and episodic masterpiece, Sano's panel seems unfeignedly simple but touching, in the spirit of a votive painting. The attention to such homely details as the colored panes of glass or the toothless face of Bernardino, adored by a friar and a layman, is especially affective.

KC

25. The Nativity

Barbara Piasecka Johnson

Tempera and gold on wood. 52.5 × 40.5 cm. The panel, which extends beyond the original, lipped paint edge on all sides, has a vertical grain.

Nowhere is Sano's conservatism more apparent than in his treatment of familiar subjects. Some of the compositional elements of this picture—the cave, the kneeling figures of Mary and Joseph, the background scene of the Annunciation to the Shepherds, who are huddled near their penned sheep and frightened dog—can be traced back to the early fourteenth century (see Freuler 1986, pp. 56–57). Other details—most notably the naked Christ Child lying on the barren ground, surrounded by an aureole of golden light—derive from Saint Bridget's vision at the grotto in Bethlehem in 1370 (Cornell 1924, p. 12). These two traditions are fused in a closely related panel on Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori's choir stalls for the Cappella de' Signori in the Palazzo Pubblico, executed between 1415 and 1428. Sano treated the theme with little variation in two miniatures datable between 1459 and 1463 (see cat. 21, and Damiani 1984, p. 163), and in a somewhat later predella panel in the Vatican (the connection between the present *Nativity* and the Vatican predella was noted in the catalogue to the sale of the Marshall collection held at Sotheby's, London, December 31, 1973–January 8, 1974, no. 93; see also *Paintings by Old Masters*, Colnaghi, London, June 7–July 7, 1978, no. 3). What must have been the prototype for all of these compositions is known only from a fragment of the center panel of an altarpiece in the Siena Pinacoteca showing the Annunciation to the Shepherds (provenance unknown: the panel has been cut below the crest of the cave; the arched edges are original). The fragment dates to the 1450s (see Torriti 1977, p. 276). The present *Nativity*, perhaps a small altarpiece for a private chapel,



seems, by contrast, to date from the last decade of Sano's long career. In general, this was a period of decline, but occasionally—as here—the figure types and compositions created decades earlier glimmer with a simple but heartfelt piety. Artistic ambition plays no significant role in these pictures, which are conceived first as devo-

tional aids—as Franciscan *arte sacra*—and only secondarily as works of art.

The earliest notice of the picture was in the sale of the collection of Dora Wilson (Sotheby's, London, February 26, 1958, no. 30).

KC

GIOVANNI DI PAOLO

(Giovanni di Paolo di Grazia)

active by 1417; died 1482

There is some confusion about the artist's birth date and early career. A certain Giovanni di Paolo was baptized in 1403, but he is unlikely to have been the artist, who was already active in 1417. On September 5 of that year, Fra Niccolò Galgani (d. 1424), convent librarian of San Domenico, paid him for miniatures in an unidentified Book of Hours for "Donna Anna uxor Christophori de Castigliano" (Koudelka 1959, pp. 114, 133–34, 137–38; this notice has recently been taken into account by Bähr 1988). The same patron commissioned a crucifix from Jacopo della Quercia in 1418, with Galgani again acting as an intermediary. Donna Anna was the wife of the Milanese jurist and Pavian law professor Cristoforo Castiglione (1345–1425)—himself a third cousin and early university professor of Cardinal Branda Castiglione (about 1360–1443) of Castiglione Olona, a patron of Masolino and of Vecchietta. Her brothers were the assassins of Giovanni Maria Visconti (1388–1412), so the couple may have been favorably regarded in what was then a ferociously republican Siena, where they stayed from about 1415 to 1419 (Mari 1979, pp. 140–46). From 1400 to 1404, Castiglione was a member of the supervisory board of Milan Cathedral, and, consequently, would have personally known the work of the Lombard illuminators Giovannino de'Grassi (first documented 1389; d. 1398) and Michelino da Besozzo (active 1388–1450). Such a patron could have introduced Giovanni di Paolo to Lombard miniature painting—and, indeed, the artist's style of rendering drapery on occasion approximates the sinuous manner of Michelino da Besozzo.

Giovanni di Paolo's early Lombard patrons and his contacts with Northern art give added weight to his authorship of a box depicting *The Triumph of Venus*, dated 1421, in the Louvre (Meiss 1936, pp. 137–43). His youthful activity as a miniaturist also explains his subsequent accomplishments in the field. He executed illuminations in choir books for the Augustinian monks at Lecceto (see cat. 30) and illustrations for a *Divine Comedy* for Alfonso V of Aragon, King of Naples, between 1438 and 1444 (now in the British Museum, London, Yates-Thompson ms. 36). In addition, sometime between 1457 and 1471 he illuminated five unpublished initials in a Roman Missal for the cathedral (see cat. 56). As an artist independently active as early as 1417, he could have been in touch with the Limbourg brothers, the Franco-Flemish illuminators, who were in Siena about 1413. Their influence is especially apparent in some of Giovanni di Paolo's landscapes. His precocious assimilation of Lombard and French Gothic art accounts for much in his stylistic development and for the nervous, staccato linear quality that distinguishes his work from that of his Siennese contemporaries. Regardless of whether he apprenticed with Taddeo di Bartolo or Martino di Bartolomeo—both have been proposed—this Northern element is indispensable for understanding the character of his art.

His other documented early commission, which again involved Galgani, was for an image of the Blessed Catherine of Siena, ordered in 1418 by Franceschino Castiglione—probably Cristoforo's son, and most certainly his judicial colleague—for a nun named Niccolina at the convent of Santa Marta. The Siennese Dominicans were actively promoting Catherine's cause, and during this particularly important moment, the testimony of the last of her surviving acquaintances was being gathered. Through their association with the University of Pavia, the Castiglione family undoubtedly knew the Siennese Cistercian monk Stefano Maconi, then prior of the Certosa in Pavia, who had translated Tommaso

d'Antonio Caffarini's biography of Catherine into Italian in order to popularize her legend. The artist's connection with this Dominican circle would serve him well years later when he painted the first cycle of scenes from Saint Catherine's life (cat. 38 a–j), and it accounts for his sensitive handling of the iconography; of more immediate importance, it led to commissions for altarpieces for San Domenico.

Altogether, the artist painted four altarpieces for chapels in San Domenico. The *Christ Suffering and Triumphant* (Siena Pinacoteca) was probably painted in the early 1420s for the altar endowed by Francesco Bellanti, Bishop of Grosseto, whose coat of arms appears on the reverse of the panel (its later provenance is San Niccolò al Carmine). The other polyptychs—the so-called Pecci altarpiece, of 1426; the Branchini altarpiece, of 1427; and the Guelfi altarpiece, of 1445 (cat. 32)—are disassembled (see Bähr 1988, for the patronage of these altars). The Pecci and Branchini altarpieces show the influence of a lost work of 1425/26 by Gentile da Fabriano for the Sienese notaries' guild. The remarkable cast shadows of the Pecci predella panel of the *Entombment* (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore) also reflect a Gentile prototype—possibly the recorded, but lost, altarpiece in San Cristoforo. Giovanni later copied scenes from Gentile's *Adoration of the Magi* in Santa Trinità, Florence (now in the Uffizi and in the Louvre). He also borrowed compositional motifs from Fra Angelico's work—as in the Guelfi altarpiece predella (see cat. 32 a, b). The dependence is iconographic, not stylistic, and proves Giovanni's familiarity with the Dominican Observant movement and the imagery created for it by Angelico.

Giovanni di Paolo's inventive powers excelled in narrative subjects that had little or no fixed visual tradition in Sienese art. Like many Sienese painters of his generation, storytelling engaged his imagination. Paintings depicting the lives of Saints Catherine of Siena, Ansanus, John the Baptist, Clare, and Galganus, and his illustrations of Dante are among his greatest achievements.

Although he painted a few book covers for the Sienese government archives, his major commissions came from the local monastic communities, and evince his great sensitivity to their visual needs. He worked not only for Dominicans, but for Franciscans—collaborating in 1445/46 with Sano di Pietro—Servites, Augustinians, and Cistercians. His *Crucifixion* of 1440 (Siena Pinacoteca) is from the Church of the Osservanza and was probably commissioned by Saint Bernardino, whose image he also painted several times. Other important commissions of the 1440s were for the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, including the altarpiece ordered by the guild of the Pizzicaiuoli, the purveyors of dry goods, in 1447 (cat. 38). Giovanni was one of the “illustrious painters of Siena” who in 1463 produced an altarpiece, still *in situ*, for Pius II's newly constructed church in Pienza.

During the last years of his long life his abilities deteriorated and assistants intervened but, despite age, his imagination did not wane, as the predella scenes of the San Galgano altarpiece (Siena Pinacoteca) attest. On January 29, 1482, “corpore languens,” he made his last will. He died sometime before March 27 and was buried in the chapel dedicated to John the Baptist (which he had endowed in a previous testament) in the now-destroyed church of Sant'Egidio.



26 a

26 a. A Franciscan Saint Receiving Pilgrims Led by Saint James the Great

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 25.2 × 43.3 cm.; painted surface 24.4 × 41.5 cm. The picture has been transferred to a new panel and cradled. Irregular strips in the picture surface measuring approximately .7 cm. at the right and bottom, 1.4 cm. at the left, and 1.3 cm. at the top have been made up. The pink tiles of the overhang and the pilgrims' shoes have been reinforced, and the tooled border is not original. Otherwise, the condition is good.

26 b. A Franciscan Saint Levitating before a Crucifix

Private collection

Tempera, silver, and gold on wood. 25.9 × 43.2 cm.; painted surface 24.5 × 42 cm. The picture has been transferred to a panel and cradled. Irregular strips in the picture surface measuring approximately 2 cm. at the right, 1.5 cm. at the left and top, and .7 cm. at the bottom have been made up. Otherwise, the surface is in an excellent state, so much so that the silver in the left-hand window is preserved unoxidized.

The two panels are from a predella for an altarpiece that undoubtedly came from a Franciscan church. However, the haloed Franciscan friar who is the subject of both pictures is not easily identified. In the first scene, a saint wearing a blue mantle over a violet undergarment presents a group of ragged pilgrims to the friar. The figure is identified by Kaftal (1952, col. 1064) as Christ. However, as his halo is not cruciform, he must, instead, be James the Greater, the patron saint of pilgrims.

The second panel shows the monk in a cell, levitating before a crucifix. The event recalls the scene of the Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas (cat. 1 a) from the predella of Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece, except that Thomas is not seen levitating. The three monks who arrive from another building are dressed in habits of different colors: The monk at the far left wears a dark-brown habit, the monk in front of him is in gray—as is the saint—while the figure in the doorway has a light-brown habit. At this time, color did not denote the different Franciscan groups; for example, Bernardino—an Observant friar—is shown in either a brown or a gray habit in contemporary Sienese painting, and it would seem that Franciscan habits ranged between these colors. Only in the sixteenth century, when the Capuchins came into being, was color



26 b

used to differentiate the two principal branches of the order. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the habits of the Spiritual Franciscans were distinguished not by color, but by length and condition (Strehlke 1987, pp. 87–88). In the painting under discussion, the different tonalities of the habits served to vary the picture's palette. This also seems to be the case in Jan van Eyck's nearly contemporary *Stigmatization of Saint Francis*, in which Saint Francis and Brother Leo wear brown and black habits, respectively.

Although the friar portrayed in these two scenes cannot be securely identified, there are parallels with episodes from the Life of the Blessed Andrea Gallerani (d. 1251). On the exterior of the wings of the so-called Andrea Gallerani diptych, by a follower of Guido da Siena (originally in the Misericordia, now in the Siena Pinacoteca), Gallerani is receiving a group of pilgrims—without Saint James present—and in another scene he is shown praying before a crucifix, his head in a noose to maintain his concentration. Gallerani was, however, a member of a charitable lay order, not a Franciscan.

A Sienese Franciscan, the events of whose life approximated the incidents depicted in the two pictures, is the Blessed Piero Pettinaio (d. 1289). His tomb in San Fran-

cesco was much venerated, and the commune of Siena officially instituted the celebration of his cult in 1329 (Vauchez 1977). On more than one occasion, while deep in prayer, he was seen to levitate (Cristofani 1890, p. 40). He is also known to have made several pilgrimages—among them, one to Pistoia to venerate the relics of Saint James the Greater preserved there (Vauchez 1968, col. 720). Piero Pettinaio was one of Siena's most famous religious figures; Dante mentioned him in *The Divine Comedy*, and Ubertino da Casale, who knew him personally, praised him in the *Arbor Vitae* as a spiritual leader. However, Pettinaio was never sanctified, and, although toward the end of his life he lived in a cell in San Francesco, he was only a member of the third, or lay, order. Images of him before the fifteenth century do not exist; the earliest certain one is that on Vecchietta's reliquary cupboard from the Spedale della Scala, in which he is depicted as a wizened old man dressed in a lay habit that consists of a mantle over a Franciscan tunic. Instead of a *cappuccio*, he wears a hat. In Vecchietta's fresco of the Madonna of Mercy (Palazzo Pubblico) of about 1461 he is haloed (like all the other Sienese blessed in the fresco), but this image postdates Pius II's *Laetare* of 1459, in which he praises Pettinaio's spirituality. If the

two predella panels—which predate Vecchietta’s earliest representation by about a decade—depict Pettinaio, they are a record of a different visual tradition and devotion that might have been confined to circles in San Francesco, where the panels may well have originated. This proposal must, however, remain hypothetical. Nonetheless, it should be noted that in Sassetta’s Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece the Blessed Ranieri is shown with a halo and wearing a Franciscan habit, even though he, too, was only a member of the lay order.

One other possible identification can be proposed: the Blessed Giles of Assisi (d. 1292), a companion of Saint Francis usually represented as a middle-aged friar (Mariano da Alatri 1964). He had made a pilgrimage at the behest of Saint Francis to Saint James’s shrine at Compostela (AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 221). There, he preached that mankind should learn to love and fear God and to repent. He also traveled to the Holy Land and to Rome, and was part of Francis’s mission to Tunis to convert the Saracens. At the end of his life he spent long hours in his cell at Monte Ripido, near Perugia, where he was frequently seen in silent and immobile rapture. Pope Gregory IX once visited him there and found him levitating. The friar was said to be particularly devoted to the body and blood of Christ (AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 225), which might account for the life-like and bloody appearance of the crucifix in this painting. Giles was buried at San Francesco al Prato in Perugia, where there was an important altarpiece by Taddeo di Bartolo on the altar near his tomb (I would like to thank Gail Solberg for this information). A Perugian fresco by Mariano d’Antonio Nutoli includes the scene of the pope visiting Giles in his cell (Kaftal 1965, fig. 603). In that image and in the few others known of him he is shown with the rays of a blessed. He enjoyed a certain fame in the Sienese Franciscan convent: A copy of the account of his life and sayings is recorded in the library there (Humphreys 1978, p. 148, n. 1107).

The inclusion of Saint James in one of the scenes has led Christiansen (verbally) to suggest that a fragmentary panel of Saint James in the Siena Pinacoteca (75.5 × 39 cm., cut at the bottom and sides, remade at the top) may perhaps come from the same altarpiece. The saint in Siena wears a yellow mantle with a blue lining, whereas in the predella the mantle is blue, but the panels are contemporary: The figurative style corresponds to that of Giovanni di Paolo’s works of the early 1430s, such as the 1431 *Madonna of Mercy* in Santa Maria dei Servi, Siena, the *Saint Matthew and Saint Francis of Assisi* (cat. 28), and an unpublished *Resurrection* in the collection of George A. Douglass, Riverside, Connecticut.

Pope-Hennessy (1937, pp. 73–74, 106–7, notes 34–38) once tentatively identified a *Saint Anthony of Padua Leaving the Canon Regulars and Donning the Franciscan*

Habit (Pinacoteca Vaticana) and an *Apparition of Saint Francis of Assisi at Arles* (Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Siena) as parts of the same predella, but the larger sizes and later dates of those panels argue against this view.

CS

27. The Way to Calvary

Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 31.5 × 33 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been cut at the bottom and thinned to .8 cm. There are losses in the soldier restraining the Virgin and in the sleeve and cloak of John the Evangelist. The sky is very thin, in some places worn down to the preparation, and the gold halos and other mordant gold detailing are much abraded.

The scene represents the moment of Mary’s meeting with Christ on the road to Calvary, as described in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, by an anonymous thirteenth-century Franciscan:

When, however, outside the gate of the city, at a cross-roads, she encountered Him, for the first time seeing Him burdened by such a large cross, she was half dead of anguish and could not say a word to Him; nor could He speak to her; He was so hurried along by those who led Him to be crucified. But after going a little farther on, the Lord turned to the weeping women and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Way to Calvary*. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore





Figure 2. Giovanni di Paolo. *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

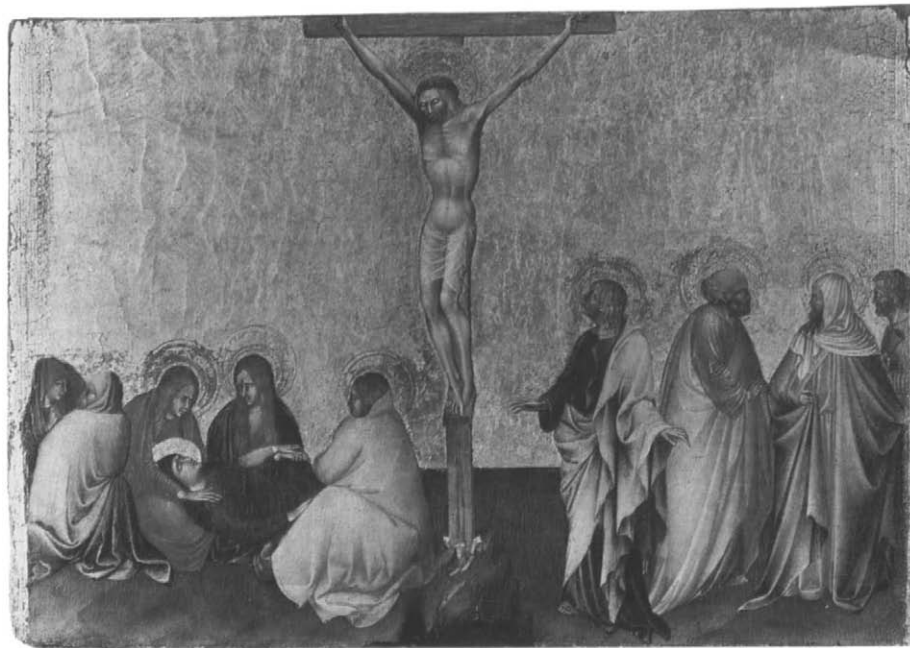


Figure 3. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Crucifixion*. Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg

me, but weep for yourselves, . . . " as is more fully related in the Gospel of Luke (23:28) (Ragusa and Green 1961, p. 332).

The artist has emphasized the unusual length of the cross, as commented upon in the *Meditations* and other sources (it was said to have been fifteen feet long). The figure who is shown helping Christ bear it is not mentioned in the *Meditations*, but he is identified by Luke (23:26) as Simon of Cyrene.

The painting is part of a predella depicting Christ's Passion. The other extant scenes are a *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* and a *Deposition* (both 32.5 × 33 cm.; in the Pinacoteca Vaticana), and a *Crucifixion* (29 × 42 cm., cut at the top; in the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg); see fig. 2–4. A fifth scene, probably showing the Resurrection, is missing. The panels would have been arranged chronologically, with the *Crucifixion*, which is wider, occupying the center position. The main panels of the altarpiece have not been identified.

The predella dates from the early 1430s, and marks an important step in the development of Giovanni di Paolo as a narrative painter, subsequent to the Passion predella of the so-called Pecci altarpiece, executed in 1426 for a chapel in San Domenico, Siena (now in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg). The Johnson painting repeats many of the motifs from the *Way to Calvary* in Baltimore (see fig. 1): the Virgin, her arms raised toward the cross, being re-

strained by the soldier, and the relative positions of Christ, the man leading him by a rope, and Simon of Cyrene. These elements are based on earlier prototypes deriving from Simone Martini's *Way to Calvary* (Louvre, Paris) from the Orsini altarpiece. The Pecci predella panel is very faithful to Simone's conception, incorporating such further details as the man pushing Christ, Saint John trying to pull the Virgin away, and three infant onlookers. Giovanni di Paolo did not know the Orsini altarpiece—then surely in France—but his model might have been a copy or another similar composition. A possible intermediary could have been the scene from Andrea di Bartolo's Passion predella (Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano) in which, for example, there is an unarmed man leading Christ by a rope, a detail omitted by Simone (Coor 1961, pp. 55–60, fig. 1). In the Johnson painting Giovanni distances himself from the Pecci predella by reducing the number of figures to the essentials; however, a specifically Simonesque model cannot have been far from his mind, because, like Simone—although with much-diminished dramatic tension—he includes the Magdalene, standing with her arms raised, at the point where the procession turns the corner.

In the depictions by Simone and by Andrea di Bartolo, and in the Pecci predella, the urban setting plays a greater role in the narrative; the city gate is strategically positioned at the center of the composition, with the crowd emptying out of the town, whereas here it becomes a simple backdrop for the action. The angled gate at the



Figure 4. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Deposition*. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City

far left establishes a shallow, stage-like space. This is typical of the way Giovanni composed in his middle period, using only the most significant elements.

Two edifices in the background are imaginative evocations of Roman monuments. The round tower with the spiraling decoration recalls Trajan's Column and the multilevel building set in the wall, the Septizonium. The same monuments had been used over a century earlier by the Master of Santa Cecilia to suggest a Roman setting for a scene from the Life of Saint Francis in the Upper Church of the basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. Taddeo di Bartolo showed Trajan's Column in his frescoed map of Rome in the Palazzo Pubblico. Giovanni di Paolo employs these structures not to call to mind Rome, but simply to localize the scene in an ancient city.

The octagonal edifice on the right, which refers specifically to Jerusalem, was well known in Sienese painting. Duccio introduced the building into the scene of Christ entering Jerusalem, from the *Maestà*, and contemporary viewers would have readily recognized it as the Jewish Temple. The same polygonal form crowns the temple in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple*, dated 1342 (originally in the cathedral; now in the Uffizi, Florence), and a similar architectural type is described in Flavius Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum*, in which the author notes that many square towers and an octagonal one distinguished the Jerusalem skyline. Herod had built the octagonal tower and dedicated it to his brother Phasaelus.

It has been argued that in Duccio's *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* the ancient city is based on Josephus's description (Deuchler 1979, and 1980). Even if many of these specific topographical references had been lost by Giovanni di Paolo's time, the artist is unlikely to have been completely unaware of the tradition. In the earlier Pecci predella panel, he included two polygonal buildings that could represent both the Temple and Phasaelus's tower, and in the panoramic views of Jerusalem that appear in the two companion panels in the Vatican there are several centrally planned edifices and variously shaped towers.

The city architecture poses some problems for the reconstruction of the Johnson-Vatican-Altenburg predella in that it is not the same in any two panels. The similar style and dimensions and the repetition of figures compensate somewhat for this inconsistency, but Giovanni di Paolo took the trouble to show Jerusalem from a different viewpoint in each scene.

The Vatican panels contain panoramic nocturnal landscapes that are very close, compositionally, to the landscape in the *Flight into Egypt* (Siena Pinacoteca), also dating from the mid-1430s. This is the time when the artist took the most care in integrating action with landscape settings and lavished attention on atmospheric effects—as in his experiment with the depiction of night. In his later production landscapes become fantastical: Cultivated rows of fields and mountains seem to float, or recede so sharply that their perspectival insistency becomes as much a decorative element as a spatial one. This more naturalistic period in the 1430s reflects, on the one hand, the artist's familiarity with Gentile da Fabriano's altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi (Uffizi, Florence, and the Louvre, Paris), which he copied in several paintings executed during these years (see cat. 35), and, on the other hand, Sassetta's *Madonna of the Snow* (formerly in Siena Cathedral; now Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence). The nocturnal scenes and the golden, setting sun in the Vatican panels derive from Gentile, while the wispy clouds in the Johnson panel reflect the subtle atmospheric effects of Sassetta's predella.

CS

28. Saint Matthew and Saint Francis of Assisi

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 138.7 × 88.3 cm. (including added strips); painted surface 134.3 × 85.1 cm. The panel has been cut at the top; parts of the original raised gesso decoration survive.

Inscribed (in the halos): SANCTVS•MACTEVS•APOSTOLVS;
SANCTVS•FRANCISCVS SERA[F]RIC[VS]

This panel is from an altarpiece that also included a *Madonna and Child* (84.5 × 56.7 cm.: formerly in a tabernacle in the via della Terme, Siena, and now in the collection of the Monte dei Paschi), and a *Saint Ursula* and a *Saint John the Baptist* (104.5 × 44.5 cm. and 101.6 × 43.2 cm.: in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; see Pope-Hennessy 1937, pp. 12–13; see also fig. 1–3). The Metropolitan Museum's painting, which formed the right lateral section of the altarpiece, is the only remaining panel that has not been cut down. The two panels of saints in Houston have been separated and cut below the knees, and the *Madonna and Child* is missing the lower portion.

The original location of the altarpiece is not known, but the presence of Saint Francis has suggested that it

may have come from the church of San Francesco in Siena, where Giovanni di Paolo is believed to have painted an altarpiece in 1436 for the Fondi family chapel (Pope-Hennessy 1937, pp. 12–13). This chapel was renovated after a fire destroyed part of the church in 1655. A fire might well account for the fragmentary condition of the Houston and Siena panels. Unfortunately, early descriptions of the Fondi altarpiece are not precise. In 1575 Bossio (f. 664) recorded the altar's dedication to Saint James the Greater, but did not detail the subject of the altarpiece beyond mentioning the presence of the Madonna and Child. The date of the dedication of the chapel to Saint James is not known. However, the absence of a representation of the saint in the reconstructed altarpiece does not necessarily exclude the altarpiece's association with the Fondi Chapel, particularly since in all other descriptions of Sienese chapels Bossio indicates when the saint's image is on the altar dedicated to him.

Another reference to the Fondi altarpiece, by Ugurgieri (1649, p. 346), gives its date, but describes only the predella, which showed the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Crucifixion. Ugurgieri also mentions that decorative borders of fruit and flowers separated each scene. This latter detail applies to three panels in the Siena



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *Saint Ursula*. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Figure 2. Giovanni di Paolo. *Saint John the Baptist*. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Figure 3. Giovanni di Paolo. *Madonna and Child*. Monte dei Paschi, Siena



Pinacoteca—the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Crucifixion*, and the *Flight into Egypt*—which, it has been argued, are from the Fondi altarpiece (Brandi 1940–41, pp. 236–38), yet, except for the *Crucifixion*, the subjects of the scenes do not correspond (de Nicola 1918, p. 46, n. 5). In any case, the varying dimensions would preclude any connection between that predella and the altarpiece to which the Metropolitan Museum's panel belongs.

If the evidence that any of these paintings came from the Fondi altarpiece is inconclusive, their dating to the mid-1430s can be accepted without hesitation. The Houston *Saint Ursula* is adapted from a figure of Saint Mary Magdalene in the Quaratesi altarpiece, painted by Gentile da Fabriano in 1425 (originally in San Niccolò oltr'Arno, Florence; now in the Uffizi), and the pose of the Christ Child in the Siena panel derives from the center section of the same altarpiece (in the Royal Collections, London). This phenomenon recurs in a number of Giovanni's works datable to the 1430s.

However, in the Houston-Siena-New York altarpiece, the quotations from Gentile have been tempered by contact with Sassetta—in particular, with his *Madonna of the Snow* altarpiece painted in 1430–32 for Siena Cathedral (Contini-Bonacossi Bequest, Florence). The figure types of the *Saint Francis* in New York and of the *Saint John the Baptist* in Houston derive from their counterparts in that altarpiece, and the linear patterns of the drapery, which falls in elegant curved planes, also reflect Giovanni's experience of Sassetta, and announce a new tendency toward an extremely decorative Gothicism. Evidence that Sassetta mediated this change can be seen by comparing the present, dispersed altarpiece with Giovanni di Paolo's only dated painting from the 1430s, his *Madonna of Mercy* of 1431 in Santa Maria dei Servi, Siena), which is still related in style to the so-called Pecci and Branchini altarpieces of 1426 and 1427, respectively.

CS

29. The Initial A, with God the Father Appearing to David (cutting from a Gradual)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu

Tempera and gold on vellum. 20 × 18.6 cm.

A dragon forms the letter A, and there is a man's head in the lower left, in the curved foliate end of the beast's tail. The border is a simple geometric pattern made to appear in relief. The text that it illustrates is the Introit for the Mass of the first Sunday of Advent: "Ad te levavi animam meam" (Psalm 24:1); on the verso is the fragmented continuation of the text, with musical notation: "[me inimici] mei: et enim u[nivers]i qui te expec[tant] n[on] confundentur." As was common, this illustration shows God the Father appearing to King David (see Girolamo da Cremona's illumination for the same text in the cathedral Gradual, 18.3, f. 2: Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 98, 100). Here, however, the artist does not specify David's attributes—the regal crown and the psalmist's harp.

On the verso, in an early-nineteenth-century hand, is an attribution to Giovanni di Paolo: "Di Giovanni di Paulo Sanese circa la mettà del secolo XV. 1445 medesimo di una tavola di S. Andrea a Siena" ("By Giovanni di Paolo about the middle of the XVth century. 1445 the same as a panel in S. Andrea in Siena"). The painting in Sant'Andrea is the *Coronation of the Virgin with Saints*, signed and dated 1445. In the nineteenth century it was one of the few pictures by Giovanni di Paolo still on an altar in Siena. The fact that the inscription says that "S. Andrea" is in Siena might suggest that the antiquarian was not Sienese.

The Getty cutting, which is definitely by Giovanni di Paolo, is earlier in date than the year proposed on the verso. As Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto (1984, pp. 130–31) has noted, it is more archaic in style than the Lecceto choir book (cat. 30), datable about 1445. There is no landscape background, but the composition and the letter type are the same as in the Lecceto volume.

Giovanni di Paolo's earliest recorded activity is as a miniaturist, but no documented miniatures before the Lecceto choir books exist. Ciardi Dupré dal Poggetto (1984, p. 130) has attributed to his early period a group of miniatures in a choir book from the Spedale della Scala (codex 98.4: now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), but as Boskovits (1983, p. 269) has observed, they are actually by another painter whom he has named the Master of Saint Ansanus. The date of this cutting probably falls between that of the so-called Pecci altarpiece of 1426 and the *Madonna of Mercy* of 1431 in Santa Maria dei Servi, Siena, or shortly after.

The provenance of the Getty cutting is not known, but it may come from a lost choir book from Lecceto. It was formerly in the collection of John Pope-Hennessy. CS





30. Antiphonary

Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena
(codex G.I.8)

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 213 + 1 folios 57.5 × 40 cm. with modern numeration. The leather binding over wood boards with metal decorations is original (63 × 41.5 cm.). The 15th-century sections of the codex contain the Office of the Common of Saints, covering the birth of the apostles and Easter through Pentecost, the antiphons for the Office of the Virgin, the Office of the Dead, and the Feast of Saint John at Porta Latina. The decoration consists of 32 illuminated initials of varying sizes (folios 2 v, 8 r, 13 v, 22 v, 26 r, 45 v, 66 v, 70 r, 71 v, 73 v (unfinished), 78 v, 92 r, 103 r, 103 v, 104 v, 108 r, 114 v, 119 r, 120 r, 122 v, 127 r, 130 v, 131 v, 132 v, 135 r, 137 v, 139 v, 158 r, 164 r, 167 r, 176 v, 177 v) and 21 historiated capitals. These are as follows:

Folio 1 r: *T* ("Tradent enim vos in conciliis . . ."). Two apostles before a judge. 16 × 13.5 cm.

Folio 4 r: *E* ("Ecce ego micto vos sicut oves in medio luporum"). Christ feeds wheat to the sheep, before a group of kneeling apostles. In the lower border, on the left, is a wolf about to attack some sheep; in the center are the arms of Lecceto; on the right is a wolf carrying away a sheep; and in a roundel on the right are two monks. 27.5 × 27 cm.

Folio 18 v: *H* ("Hic est preceptum meum"). Christ preaches on the beach of the Sea of Galilee. 32 × 23.5 cm.

Folio 25 r: *E* ("Este sanctus prolege dei sui"). Saint Ansanus stands with a banner in hand. 21.5 × 13.5 cm.

Folio 40 r: *Q* ("Qui me confessus fuerit coram hominibus"). Christ appears to a saint (Ansanus ?) kneeling in a landscape. 20.7 × 14.7 cm.

Folio 44 v: *E* ("Esturum est enim regnum celorum"). Christ appears to three saints seen from behind on a rocky ground. 22 × 15 cm.

Folio 47 r: *A* ("Absterget deus omnem lacrimam ob oculis sanctorum"). Christ wipes the eyes of the kneeling apostles. 22.5 × 19.5 cm.

Folio 62 v: *O* ("Omnes sancti quanta passi sunt tormenta"). Two kneeling young saints are beaten to death in a landscape with hills and a river. 20.5 × 10 cm.

Folio 70 v: *O* ("O doctor optime"). Saint Jerome (?) is writing at his desk. 13.5 × 13.5 cm.

Folio 85 v: *E* ("Ecce sacerdos magnus"). Saint Augustine (?) enthroned. Very rubbed. 12.5 × 12.5 cm.

Folio 99 r: *D* ("Domine quinque talenta tradidisti mihi"). A young saint kneeling in a landscape takes coins out of his purse and gives them to Christ, who appears in the sky. 14 × 14 cm.

Folio 118 r: *V* ("Veni sponsi Christi"). Saint Agnes, holding a palm and lamb, stands on a marbleized floor. 13.5 × 12 cm.

Folio 118 v: *V* ("Veni sponsi Christi"). An elderly female saint in a dark monastic habit (Monica ?) holds a book and stands on a marbleized floor. 14 × 12 cm.

Folio 149 r: *S* ("Salvator mundi"). Christ in glory over a landscape viewed from above. 13.5 × 12.5 cm.

Folio 156 v: *A* ("Alma redemptoris mater"). Against a landscape setting, the Madonna holds Christ as he kisses Joseph. 14 × 13.5 cm.

Folio 160 r: *R* ("Regina celi letare"). The Madonna enthroned, with two praying angels and two angels holding a crown above her. 14.5 × 12 cm.

Folio 161 r: *A* ("Ave regina celorum"). The Madonna and Child enthroned in the angelic Host, above a landscape. In the border is a profile of a Roman male wearing a crown. 15 × 14.5 cm.

Folio 162 r: Illustration to the Office of the Dead ("Incipit Offitium pro defunctis"). In a wooded landscape at sunset, the winged figure of Death, astride a firespitting horse, aims an arrow at a young man already wounded in the neck by another arrow. 15 × 26.5 cm.

Folio 162 v: *D* ("Dirige domine"). Christ, in the sky, guides a young man through a landscape. Much rubbed. 14.5 × 14.5 cm.

The coats of arms on folio 4 of this magnificent, richly illustrated Antiphonary are those of the Augustinian hermitage of Lecceto. Set deep in the woods a few kilometers southwest of Siena, Lecceto was one of Siena's most important spiritual communities. Reported to have been founded by Saint Augustine himself, it was also believed to have succored Siena's patron saint and proselytizer, Ansanus. While these legends lent luster to the monastery's history, the strict way of life practiced there gained it many admirers, including Saint Catherine, and secured for it a central role in the Augustinian reform, or Observant, movement during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. This reform paralleled those of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, championed, respectively, by Saint Bernardino in Siena and Dominici and Antonino in Florence. In 1385 the Augustinian vicar-general Bartolomeo da Venezia removed Lecceto from the control of the provincial monastery (in this case Sant'Agostino in Siena), and placed other hermitages in the area under Lecceto's tutelage. Reflecting this enhanced position, under the priorships of Niccolò Cerritani and Filippo degli Aragazzi the community's life gradually became more organized. What had been a scattered grouping of cells grew to include communal monastic buildings with cloisters, and the monks, who meditated alone and kept a vow of silence, now also assembled for chanted prayer. In the second decade of the fifteenth century this new monastic practice led to the production of the hermitage's first set of choir books, including a Psalter of 1415 (codex Add. 30014: now in the British Museum). In the 1430s, Augustinian theorists like the Milanese Andrea Biglia (about 1395–1435), professor at the University of Siena and a frequent visitor to Lecceto in the years 1429 to 1432, praised eremitism as practiced at Lecceto as the best way of giving new direction to the order (Biglia 1968 ed.; Arbesmann 1965, especially pp. 164, 186, 217). Lecceto, in fact, caught the considerable atten-





30: f. 1 r



30: f. 4 r



30: f. 18 v



30: f. 25 r



30: f. 40 r



30: f. 70 v



30: f. 99 r



30: f. 118 r



30: f. 118 v



30: f. 149 r



30: f. 156 v



30: f. 160 r





30: f. 162 r

tion of the papal reformer of monastic life Eugenius IV, who took advantage of its independent position to create a separate Augustinian Observant order; in a bull of 1446 he granted Lecceto independence from the vicar-general of the order, and made it the head of a vast network of hermitages (see Walsh 1972, pp. 85–175).

The choir book is not dated, but it must have been produced during this important phase in Lecceto's history—the second stage of its development from a simple hermitage to a powerful monastic center. It is almost certainly referred to in a seventeenth-century description of the library at Lecceto as “the *Comunella de santi*, which was illuminated in 1442” (Altesi 1633, ff. 59–60; reported by Vailati Schoenburg Waldenburg 1981, pp. 12–13, 19). The source of this information is not known, but the *Comunella de santi* correctly describes the office contained in the Antiphonary. Several other choir books were illuminated about the same time (codices G.I.8, G.I.13, G.I.9, H.I.2: Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena) in what was probably a concentrated effort to improve the monastery's holdings. During approximately the same period, the cloister was frescoed with episodes of eremitic life and stories from the lives of Saints Augustine and Monica (for a summary of the problems relating to the Lecceto frescoes, see Boskovits 1983, pp. 269, 276, notes 53, 54). The impetus for all of this activity may have been the important general meeting of the Augustinian order, which was held at Lecceto in 1443.

All but four of the historiated letters (ff. 149 r, 156 v, 160 r, 161 r) and most of the decorated capitals are by Giovanni di Paolo, who executed three miniatures in a Gradual in the same series (H.I.2) as well. Concurrently, the artist also worked for a nearby dependency of Lecceto, San Leonardo al Lago, where, in the refectory, he painted a large monochrome fresco of the Crucifixion (Carli 1961, fig. 5–13, 15).

The Lecceto illuminations are among Giovanni di Paolo's most eloquent and singular works, and they stand apart as a separate and distinct expression of his creative powers. As befits a large, illuminated book, the scenes are immediate in their effect and sparse in detail, despite the wonderfully elaborate foliate and anthropomorphic lettering that encloses them. Since the Antiphonary was designed to be placed on a high lectern and viewed from below, the figures were purposively exaggerated in scale (much more than is normal, even for Giovanni di Paolo) so that they dominate their landscape surroundings. The narrative focus on individual emotions reflects the sympathies of an eremitic community given to tacit meditation. The elegant Gothic line, entirely devoid of the nervous quality of the artist's earlier works, imparts great dignity and repose to the figures without detracting from the intensity of feeling conveyed—as exemplified by the terror of the saint (f. 62 v)

about to be beaten to death, who hides his face in his hands; the humanity of Christ (f. 47), who, with a cloth, wipes the tears from the apostles' eyes; or even the loneliness of the divinity, as potentially expressed in the monumental figure of Christ (f. 18 v) gesticulating to an unseen crowd on a pebbly beach.

The scene of Death (f. 162 r) is treated in the same vein. Giovanni di Paolo depicted the theme on a *biccherna* cover of 1437 (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin) showing the identical morbid rider bursting in on a group of gamblers. Here, death is a lonely affair: In a dark forest upon which the sun is setting, an anguished man, already struck in the neck by an arrow, is about to be hit again. The scene could represent the forest at Lecceto itself, for the monastery was obsessed with the subject of death. Frescoes on the façade of its church, dating probably to about the same time (Boskovits 1983, p. 276, n. 53), depict an allegory that contrasts monastic life leading to redemption with worldly life leading to damnation.

In this choir book, Giovanni di Paolo's landscapes—the Lecceto forest of death, a beach, or a hilly countryside—are constructed on a microscopic scale, and they serve more as backdrops than as settings for the scenes. The number of them underscores the Lecceto community's desire for total rural isolation—an aspiration that had irritated the otherwise sympathetic Saint Catherine (Catherine of Siena 1939 ed., V, no. 326, pp. 73–75), who admonished them to “leave the wood and enter the battlefield” (“escirete dal bosco e venete a intrare nel campo della battaglia”). Giovanni di Paolo's sympathies seem to have been with the monks. The miniatures transcend any specificity of place or time.

The four illuminations not by Giovanni di Paolo display a different stylistic approach. The letters consist of wide, paper-like leaves wrapped around tree trunks, possibly reflecting a Northern model. The microcosmic landscapes are shown from a distant bird's-eye view. The figures are more solid and their drapery more fully modeled than in Giovanni di Paolo's work, and they are closer in style to the contemporaneous frescoes in the pilgrims' hospice (the Pellegrinaio) of the Spedale della Scala. The tentative suggestion (Brandi 1947, pp. 85–86, n. 70) that Priamo della Quercia might have been responsible for them gains some credibility if the miniatures are compared with his contemporary fresco in the Spedale della Scala. They also show similarities with the predella of Domenico di Bartolo's 1438 altarpiece in Perugia (Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria), on which Priamo may have been employed as an assistant. They could, on the other hand, be by a North Italian artist. The border decoration and landscape compare with the cutting of *The Calling of Saint Andrew* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) seemingly from a Gradual illuminated for an Augustinian monastery in Verona and datable to about 1440 (also noted

by Christiansen; see Castiglioni 1986, p. 48, fig. III.6). In the border of another illumination, attributed to the same master, from a Missal possibly made for San Silvestro in Verona, the physiognomy of the seated Virgin and the Virgin Annunciate is very similar to that of the figures in the Sienese initials (Castiglioni 1986, p. 48, fig. III.1, pl. p. 186).

CS

31. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. 39.3 × 46.1 cm.; painted surface 37.8 × 43.8 cm. The cradled panel has a horizontal grain. The original, lipped edges are visible on all four sides, scored lines defining the picture surface within them. On the vertical sides are traces of a gold border, which originally probably consisted of a raised gold area and a gold band. Gilt details, such as the lamp in the temple, the altar fire, and the windows, are much rubbed. A window in the left interior wall is painted out, and the enframement of the gold medallions on the temple's exterior is largely new.

The biblical text for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is Luke 2:22–39. As Mosaic law prescribed, eight days after Christ's birth, Mary and Joseph went to the temple in Jerusalem to present the child to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice of two pigeons for the Virgin's ritual purification. There, they encountered two elderly prophets: Simeon, who took Jesus in his arms and fore-

told his future, and Anna, who spoke of him as the redemption of Israel. The thirteenth-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ* elaborates the Gospel account, noting how, after Simeon spoke, "the baby Jesus stretched His arms toward His Mother and returned to her" (Ragusa and Green 1961, p. 58). This is the moment depicted here.

The feast of the Purification, or Presentation (February 2), was one of the most important in the Church's calendar, and it was celebrated with particular fervor in Siena. The altar in the cathedral dedicated to Saint Crescentius was adorned with a large altarpiece of the Presentation by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, dated 1342 (now in the Uffizi, Florence). In the fifteenth century, the guild of purveyors of dry goods, the Pizzicaiuoli, became responsible for the feast's celebrations and in 1447 commissioned from Giovanni di Paolo an altarpiece based on the Lorenzetti for the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala (see cat. 38). A few years later, Giovanni repeated the theme in a second altarpiece (see cat. 35).

In contrast to these works, the Metropolitan Museum's panel—the earliest treatment of the subject by Giovanni di Paolo—is based on a scene from the predella of Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi*, painted in 1423 for the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Trinità, Florence (see fig. 1 for the predella panel, now in the Louvre, Paris). The grouping of the main figures in the temple, the unusual exterior setting with two fashionable women on the left and two beggars on the right, and the architecture repeat Gentile's composition. The urban setting, however, has been simplified: It does not encompass a view down a side street on the right, and the building on the left is a conflation of two of Gentile's structures; the pavement, moreover, is broken, revealing a pothole. In Gentile's



Figure 1. Gentile da Fabriano. *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. Musée du Louvre, Paris



depiction, the lamp over the altar emits a light that contrasts with the dark environment; in Giovanni di Paolo's, the lamp is gilt, but it does not serve as a naturalistic source of light. Giovanni's temple is more slender in proportion, and although the open, polygonal-shaped façade implies that it is a centrally planned structure—like the temple in Gentile's scene—the interior has a long nave more reminiscent of the actual cathedral of Siena and of the setting of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's altarpiece. As in Lorenzetti's work, the colored tiles of the pavement are introduced to emphasize spatial recession. In fact, despite the overall predominance of Gentile's model, Giovanni di Paolo has incorporated several other features of Lorenzetti's altarpiece. There is a high priest—an important iconographic detail eliminated altogether in the Strozzi altarpiece—and the altar has a recessed pit with a sacrificial fire. Lorenzetti showed the priest holding an offering of two turtledoves by the wings, but here, as in the work by Gentile, Joseph carries them.

The richly dressed ladies and the beggars are not mere genre accessories but, as in a number of Flemish paintings, have a symbolic value. The marked contrast between rich and poor is fundamental to the religious significance of the Presentation. The *Meditations* explains that Mary and Joseph brought turtledoves as an offering because they were too poor to afford a sacrificial lamb (Ragusa and Green 1961, p. 58). An early-fourteenth-century Sienese miniature in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena (Antiphony 34 D, f. 254 r: ill. in van Os 1984, fig. 96), illustrates this point by depicting a lamb on the altar, and Joseph holding the birds. This also alludes to Jesus' role as the Paschal lamb. As Simeon prophesied, "this *child* is set for the fall" (Luke 2:34). In a spandrel of Lorenzetti's altarpiece Moses is shown holding a scroll with a phrase from Leviticus (12:8): "And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons." Gentile, followed by Giovanni di Paolo, introduced the lesson into the very narrative of the painting; the admonition of the *Meditations* takes on a very real meaning in their two depictions: "If you wish to learn about humility and poverty, consider in the aforementioned events the do-

nation, the redemption, and the observation of the law and you can easily perceive them" (Ragusa and Green 1961, p. 643). The rich and poor spectators are literally commentaries on the significance of the events taking place in the temple.

The *Presentation* is the last scene of a predella (fig. 2) that included, from left to right: *The Annunciation*, with *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* (40 × 46 cm.; National Gallery of Art, Washington), *The Nativity* (38.8 × 45.7 cm.; Pinacoteca Vaticana), *The Crucifixion* (38.5 × 53 cm.; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem), and *The Adoration of the Magi* (39.7 × 46.2 cm.; The Cleveland Museum of Art; see Pope-Hennessy 1937, pp. 37–38; Francis 1942). As is often the case in predellas, the central image of the Crucifixion is wider and has a gold ground. The main section of the altarpiece has not been identified. Like the *Presentation*, the *Nativity* and the *Adoration* also derive from Gentile's Strozzi altarpiece. Given Giovanni's reputation as one of the most inventive narrative artists of Quattrocento Siena, this dependence must have been required by the patron. In any case, the plagiarism would not have gone unnoticed, and Giovanni's predella stands as an example of the fame of Gentile's painting a full two decades after its execution.

The predella must have been painted by Giovanni in the early 1440s, and certainly before 1445—the date on a *gabella* cover with the *Annunciation* (Pinacoteca Vaticana); the angel on the *gabella* cover derives from the *Annunciation* in Washington.

The New York *Presentation* was owned by the early-nineteenth-century Pisan antiquarian and historian Giovanni Rosini, who published it in his monumental history of Italian art as a work by the brother of Fra Angelico, noting its similarities with Gentile's panel of the same subject in the Louvre; in the volume of plates, he, in fact, illustrated the painting as the Louvre Gentile (1840, II, p. 261, n. 23; 2nd ed., 1850, III, p. 41, n. 32, pl. 36). It is not impossible that Rosini bought the picture following the suppression of some convent in Pisan territory. Ettore Romagnoli (before 1835, II, p. 256) saw it in Rosini's collection and judged it to be by Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

CS



Figure 2. Giovanni di Paolo. Reconstruction of the predella to which catalogue 31 belonged

THE GUELFI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 32 a, b)

To judge from seventeenth-century descriptions, the altarpiece painted by Giovanni di Paolo for the chapel of the Guelfi family in San Domenico, Siena, included one of his greatest and most individual narrative predellas, two fragments of which—shown together here—survive. The antiquarian Isidoro Ugurgieri (1649, II, p. 346) provides the most complete account of the altarpiece. After mentioning two others painted by Giovanni di Paolo for the same church, he continues: "And the third [altarpiece] he made in the year 1445 for the Guelfi Chapel, which is next to that of the Colombini, in which is shown the most Blessed Virgin and saints, and in the predella is painted the Last Judgment, the Flood, and the Creation of the World (most beautiful things), and because the chapel was ruined, the altarpiece was transferred to the refectory of the convent. (Despite my diligence I have not been able to find these paintings.)" (On the San Domenico altarpieces, see Bähr 1988.) It is probable that the sequence of the scenes given by Ugurgieri, which reversed their chronology, is incorrect; he had not seen the altarpiece, which had been moved at least twenty years previously when Rutilio Manetti's

Saint Anthony Abbot Exorcises a Possessed Woman was installed on the altar (Bagnoli 1978, pp. 115–16, no. 49). Most likely the predella consisted of a wide central panel of *The Last Judgment*, with *Paradise* on the left and *Hell* on the right, flanked by the related Old Testament scenes of *The Creation* and *The Flood*. The Lehman *Creation*, and *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* is doubtlessly the work described by Ugurgieri as *The Creation*, and the *Paradise* in the Metropolitan Museum, which is unquestionably from the same predella as the Lehman panel, would be a fragment of *The Last Judgment* (it has, indeed, been cut on the right side). Pope-Hennessy (1937, pp. 17, 20–22), who first associated the two scenes with the Guelfi predella, has identified the main panels of the altarpiece with a *Madonna and Child with Saints Dominic, Peter, Paul, and Thomas Aquinas* (247 × 212 cm.) in the Uffizi, Florence (see fig. 1). The main panels of the altarpiece, related in style to the Lehman and Metropolitan Museum pictures, are signed and dated 1445, and the inclusion of two prominent Dominicans suggests that the altarpiece must have come from a Dominican establishment. The Leh-

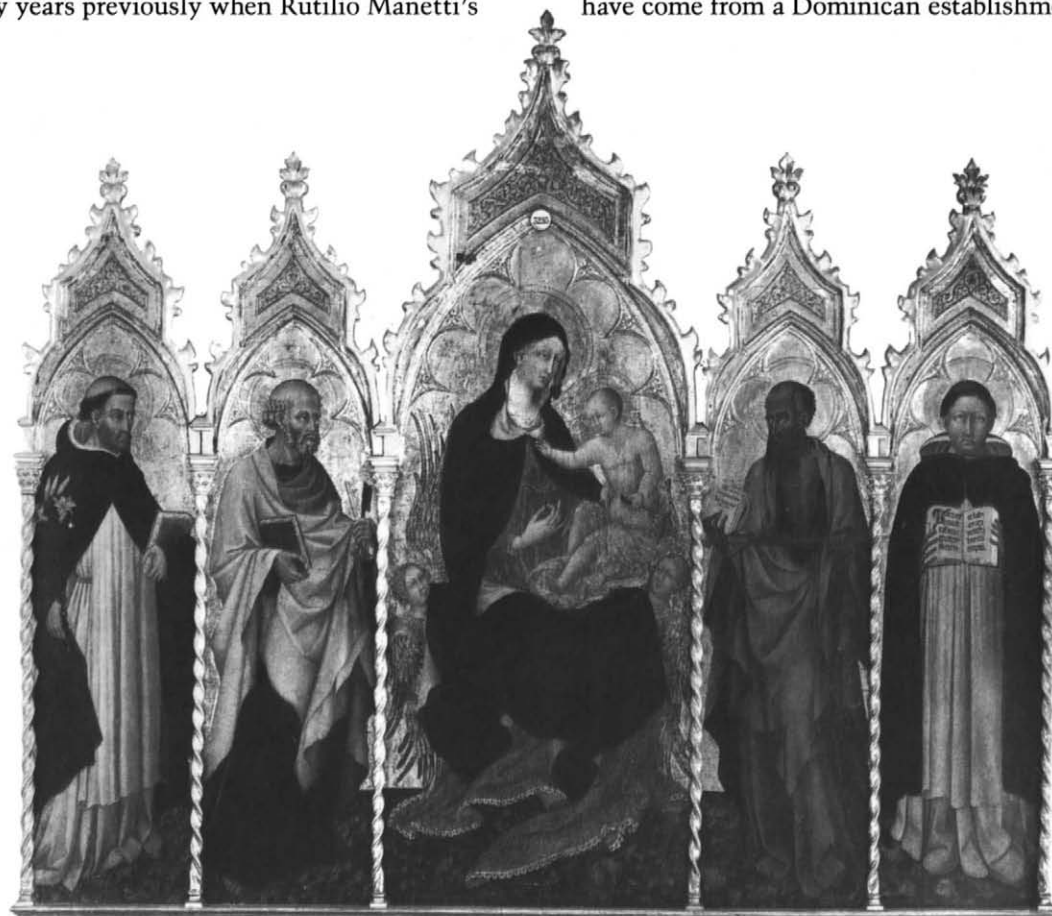


Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *Madonna and Child with Saints Dominic, Peter, Paul, and Thomas Aquinas*. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

man panel is approximately 12 cm. wider than that of Saint Dominic under which it would have been located, but close examination of the Uffizi panels reveals that each has been cut and reassembled, and that the outer parts of the frame are not original. The differences in width do not present a serious obstacle to the altarpiece's reconstruction. *The Flood* would have been below Saint Thomas, and *The Last Judgment* below the Madonna and Child and Saints Peter and Paul.

Two objections have been made concerning this reconstruction (Brandi 1947, pp. 76–77). First, an early-seventeenth-century description by Fabio Chigi (1625–26, f. 221 r) records the date on the Guelfi altarpiece as 1426. However, Chigi gives an erroneous location for it in the church and must also have confused its date with that of the artist's altarpiece of 1426 in the so-called Pecci Chapel. Secondly, in the sixteenth century the chapel containing the Guelfi altarpiece was dedicated to Saint Anthony Abbot, who is not shown in the Uffizi panels. It should be noted that the first surviving record of the dedication to Saint Anthony is Bossio's pastoral visit to the church in 1575 (f. 680); in 1445 the dedication may have been different. Moreover, in his descriptions of altars in Sienese churches, Bossio carefully noted the presence of the titular saint in the altar's decoration, since he does not do so for the Guelfi Chapel, it may be inferred that Saint Anthony was not shown in the altarpiece.

CS

32 a. The Creation, and The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 46.5 × 52 cm. The panel, which has been thinned to 8 mm., has a horizontal grain. The paint surface has been cropped at the top.

This extraordinary picture, among the masterpieces of Sienese painting, is also one of Giovanni di Paolo's most complex and fascinating images. Significantly, it dates to not long after his illuminations for the *Paradise* of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, made for Alfonso of Aragon between 1438 and 1444 (British Museum, London, Yates-Thompson ms. 36: for a review of its dating see Pope-Hennessy 1947, p. 9, notes 22, 29; Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton 1969, I, pp. 78–80, 270). As noted by Rossi (1921), Dante's poem informs every aspect of the artist's handling of the present scene.

On the right, a naked angel drives Adam and Eve from Eden. These figures derive from Jacopo della Quercia's

marble relief on the Fonte Gaia (fig. 1), installed in the Piazza del Campo in 1419. Below the garden there are four streams representing the rivers that flow to the corners of the earth. According to Genesis (2:11–14), these are the Pison, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. The same rivers are depicted flowing down a mountain located at the top of the map of the terrestrial world that occupies the center of the multicolored sphere to the left in the panel. According to fifteenth-century cartographic practice, south was at the top of the map (Dixon 1985, p. 608); Eden, therefore, appears in distant Africa. The body of water at the center right is the Mediterranean; Europe is positioned in the lower right; and Asia is shown in the lower left. A similar, although less schematic cartographic representation of the earth is found in the orb that the Christ Child holds in Fra Angelico's San Marco altarpiece dating from 1438–43 (Museo di San Marco, Florence).

The twelve circles that surround the earth in the Lehman painting correspond to Dante's system of celestial wheels and are coded by color. After the earth, shown in the center, come the three other elements: greenish water, light-blue air, and red fire. The next seven circles represent the (then) known planets, including the Sun. The Moon, Mercury, and Venus are in shades of blue; the solar sphere is white, with the Sun appearing in gold at the top of the ring. In *The Divine Comedy*, this circle is the realm of theologians (*Paradise*, cantos 10–14), presided over by Thomas Aquinas, whose attribute is a sunburst on the forehead or, as in the Guelfi altarpiece in the Uffizi, a rayed book. Gray-blue Mars, light-blue Jupiter, and blue Saturn follow. At the upper left of Jupiter's circle is a gold, six-pointed star—a symbol of the planet's power over judges and a possible allusion to the divine sentencing of Man and the eventual Last Judgment (Dixon 1985, p. 611). The next circle contains the zodiac (the astrological signs, now much rubbed, are in gold; the astrological content of this panel is the subject of a forthcoming study by Kristen Lippincott), while the deep-blue outermost ring is the *primum mobile*, which divides the sensible world from the empyrean, the measureless region of God that moves all the spheres except for the stationary earth. Beatrice describes the *primum mobile* as follows: "This heaven has no other *where* than this: / the mind of God in which are kindled both / the love that turns it and the force it rains. / As in a circle, light and love enclose it, / as it surrounds the rest—and that enclosing, / only He who encloses understands" (*Paradise* 27:109–114).

The direct source for the image need not be the early-thirteenth-century *De sphaera* by Johannes de Sacrobosco, as Dixon (1985, pp. 605–6) asserts. She unfairly downplays Dante's influence in the conception. Any number of commentaries on the *Divine Comedy* and di-



Figure 1. Jacopo della Quercia. *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

agrams of the systems of the universe could have guided the artist. Furthermore, there exist Giovanni di Paolo's own related miniatures for the *Paradise* in the Yates-Thompson manuscript. A depiction of the seven planetary circles accompanied by figured personifications of the planets illustrates the twenty-second canto (f. 169 r; Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton 1969, II, pl. 492 b): "My eyes returned through all the seven spheres/and saw this globe in such a way that I/smiled at its scrawny image and I saw clearly how they vary their positions./And all the seven heavens showed to me/their magnitudes, their speeds, the distances/of each from each./The little threshing floor/that so incites our savagery was all—from hills to river mouths—revealed to me" (*Paradise* 22:133–135, 146–152).

Specifically pertinent to the Lehman picture is an illumination in the twenty-seventh canto (f. 178 r). It shows the same map of the earth bounded by two colored circles, the thinner, inner one representing the elementary spheres and the thicker, outer one the planets enclosed by a wheel of cherubim. The Lord stands in front of this universe. His energetic gesture corresponds to that of Christ the Judge in Giovanni di Paolo's late *Last Judgment* (Pope-Hennessy 1947, p. 26) in the Siena Pinacoteca, and suggests that he is the mover of all the spheres. At this point in the poem, Beatrice bids Dante look back to see how far he has journeyed before they proceed to

the *primum mobile*. Dante describes the earth's layout: "I saw that, from the time when I looked down/before, I had traversed all of the arc/of the first clime, from its midpoint to end,/so that, beyond Cadiz, I saw Ulysses'/mad course and, to the east, could almost see/that shoreline where Europa was sweet burden./I should have seen more of this threshing floor/but for the motion of the sun beneath/my feet: it was a sign and more away" (*Paradise* 27:79–87). Taking advantage of the magnificence of the celestial panorama, Dante goes on to discourse on the pleasures of nature and art as compared to his feelings for the divine radiance of Beatrice's visage (lines 88–96). In this passage, the Sun is said to be beneath Dante's feet and two zodiacal signs back, which would place it in Aries—coincidentally, the same sign that it is passing through in the solar wheel in the present painting.

In the Lehman panel, the creation of the heavens and the earth is depicted as occurring in a single moment. On earth the waters have already receded to their shores. The creation of the angels, animals, plants, and Man is absent. In art the subject was traditionally treated as a sequential group of images that followed the separate daily events described in Genesis. This is true, for example, of the thirteenth-century mosaics in the Florentine Baptistery and of the roundels in Giovanni da Milano's Ognissanti altarpiece of about 1360, now in the Uffizi.

Giovanni di Paolo's reduced version of the Creation relates to illustrations of the Apostles' Creed, which does not make a temporal distinction about the creation of heaven and earth: "Credo in unum Deum Patrem omnipotentem factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium." In fifteenth-century Sienese art, the Creed was a popular subject—as may be seen in four surviving cycles: Benedetto di Bindo's panels of 1412 (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) from the sacristy of the cathedral; Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori's intarsia choir stalls, executed between 1415 and 1428, in the chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico; Vecchietta's allegorical fresco cycle from the late 1440s, which includes Old Testament analogies, in the ex-reliquary chapel of the Spedale della Scala, and his frescoes from the 1450s in the vaults of the Baptistery. These all may be derived, in part, from a lost cycle of the Creed by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the chapterhouse of Sant'Agostino (van Os 1974, pp. 73–75).

The Creation text was illustrated by showing the Lord either with or before the spheres of the universe. In Domenico di Niccolò's choir stalls the panel illustrating "unum Deum Patrem omnipotentem" shows the Lord holding the terrestrial globe, and in the illustration of the following article, "factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium," the Lord stands before the spheres of the universe (fig. 2). Giovanni di Paolo's mini-



32 a

ature for the twenty-seventh canto of *Paradise* is based on—and copies almost exactly—this second panel. The Lehman picture also derives from the same tradition of including the Creation in cycles depicting the Creed.

Besides the Creed, the other most immediately important textual source for the unified act of the Creation is Dante, who expounded the theory that the angels, celestial matter, and the pure elements were all created in the same instant (see Mellone 1970): “Then form and matter, either separately/or in mixed state, emerged as flawless being,/as from a three-stringed bow, three arrows spring./ And as a ray shines into amber, crystal,/or glass, so that there is no interval/between its coming and its lighting all,/so did the three-form matter, and their union flash into being from the Lord with no distinction in beginning: all at once” (*Paradise* 29:22–30).

The Creed images and the Dantesque tradition provide a general background for Giovanni di Paolo’s image, but the specificity of his universe, which includes all the wheels, not just several simple bands representative of the whole system—as in Domenico di Niccolò’s choir stalls—suggests that there may have been another source. This could well have been Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s famous lost *Mappamondo*, a revolving circular map of the universe that was in the main hall of the Palazzo Pubblico. Detailed descriptions of it do not exist, but the fact that it was circular implies that it included not just the earth but the movable celestial spheres as well. The Lehman panel may be the best surviving reflection of the *Mappamondo* (Bargagli Petrucci 1914, pp. 8–9).

The presence of the angels in the Creation presents a problem. Dante acknowledges a theological controversy about the time of the creation of the angels. Scrupulously citing Jerome’s opinion that they existed before the creation of heaven and earth (*Paradise* 29:37–45), the poet, nonetheless, sides with other authorities, particularly Thomas Aquinas, who maintained that the angels’ genesis happened at the same time. In the Lehman picture cherubim accompany God the Father in his act of creation, but it is not clear whether this implies that they existed before. Sienese cycles of the Creed take two different positions: In the Benedetto di Bindo and Vecchietta examples angels appear with God the Father in only the post-Creation scenes. In the above-mentioned miniature of the twenty-seventh canto and in Benedetto di Bindo’s panel illustrating the Creation, angels are seen in the outermost celestial circle, the *primum mobile*; they are what Dante calls the “motori” (*Paradise* 29:44), because they regulate the movement of the spheres. On the other hand, in Domenico di Niccolò’s inlaid panels of the Creed, angels are shown with God the Father in the first scene illustrating his omnipotence, but not in the actual *Creation* panel.

The angels in Giovanni di Paolo’s scene represent only one order of the heavenly hierarchy—the cherubim—who are distinguished by their blue color. The cherubim came second in rank after the red seraphim. The types were associated with the two mendicant orders—the seraphim, for their ardent love, with the Franciscans, and the cherubim, for their knowledge, with the Dominicans: “One prince was all seraphic in his ardor;/the other, for his wisdom, had possessed/the splendor of cherubic light on earth” (*Paradise* 11:37–39). The concept is also expressed by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* (I, 63:7, ad 1), in which he says that the cherubim represent “plenitudo scientiae.” The Dominican’s fame for learning is alluded to in the Latin inscription on Thomas Aquinas’s book in the Uffizi panel—“For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips”—a quotation from Proverbs (8:7) that initiates the saint’s *Summa contra Gentiles*. The same inscription appears in the *Apotheosis of Thomas Aquinas* (in the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina, Pisa), in which the saint is depicted triumphing over Averroës. The blue cherubim in the Lehman predella panel signify that Dominican rationality predominates even in the creation of the world, and their singular presence further confirms the Dominican nature and provenance of the predella.

Dixon (1985) has proposed that the subject of the Lehman picture is not the Creation, but God fixing the day of Redemption. She has noted that God is indicating a point in the zodiac between Aries and Taurus. In fifteenth-



Figure 2. Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori. Choir stall (detail). Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

32 a: detail



century astrology, those constellations ruled from mid-February through mid-April; therefore, God would be marking a date in mid-March—the period of the feast of the Annunciation on the twenty-fifth. The setting of the date of the Incarnation at the time of the Expulsion does not seem to have a theological basis that would justify considering it as the picture's main subject. On the other hand, the reference to the Annunciation is not superfluous, for the picture has more than one level of meaning. The Redemption is the overriding theme of the Guelfi predella, which included scenes of the Flood (the Old Testament event that commemorated Man's covenant with God) and of the Last Judgment: Through the Annunciation Man was redeemed. In Giovanni di Paolo's miniature for the seventh canto of *Paradise* (f. 141 r) in which Beatrice explains the process of Man's redemption, the Fall, the Annunciation, and the Crucifixion follow one another. The correlation between the Expulsion and the Annunciation was a theme of Dominican Observant painting. Fra Angelico included the Expulsion in his Annunciation altarpiece of about 1432 in Cortona (originally in San Domenico; now in the Museo Diocesano), and Giovanni di Paolo adopted the iconography for a predella panel of the Annunciation (now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington; see cat. 31, fig. 2), which dates from the same period as the Lehman panel. Confirmation, however, that Giovanni di Paolo's Lehman panel would have been interpreted as the Creation comes from a choir book illumination (see cat. 39 c) by Pellegrino di Mariano that illustrates the text, "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth." The sphere of the universe is the same and includes all the concentric circles. Instead of appearing in profile, the Lord is shown frontally, but he lays his hand on, and moves, the zodiacal wheel, as in the panel by Giovanni di Paolo.

Giovanni di Paolo was a master at painting herbs, flowers, and fruit, and many symbolic plants grow in this garden of Eden (Levi d'Ancona 1977, *passim*). Carnations and strawberries are often included in representations of Paradise. The thornless rosebush entwined around an orange tree signifies the sinless state of earthly Paradise. The lily, because it does not toil (Matthew 6:28), represents the absence of work in Eden: Growing between the angel and Adam, it underscores the passage from the state of bliss to one of labor with the hoe and the spindle. The orange trees appear in this panel as well as in its companion scene representing Paradise because its fruit abounds in seeds and is fertile; the allusion is to the tree of knowledge that caused Man's downfall, and in the *Paradise* it reminds one of Christ's sacrifice to redeem man from original sin. The rabbits that also populate both scenes have a double meaning: They refer to the lasciviousness brought about by the downfall of Man, as well as to innocence.

The nakedness of the angel is unprecedented. The significance of the narcissus covering his groin is ambiguous, and may be interpreted as the eventual triumph of divine love; the flower obviously emphasizes his genitals and his human qualities all that much more. Yet again, a passage in Dante that expounds on the humanity of the archangels could have inspired it: "And Gabriel and Michael and the angel who healed the eyes of Tobit are portrayed by Holy Church with human visages" (*Paradise* 4:46–48). Kirsch (1986) has interpreted the angel's nudity as a sign of the compassion of the angels for the misery of Man after the Fall, a desire for his redemption, and a reference to the post-Creation Fall of the Rebel Angels. Likewise, in the Expulsion scene in the Washington *Annunciation*, the angel is nearly nude—he only wears a transparent cloth.

The illuminations for the *Paradise* of the *Divine Comedy* are sufficient evidence of Giovanni di Paolo's familiarity with Dante. Undoubtedly, he had someone to advise him and explain the poem to him. Public readings from Dante were also a regular part of the city's cultural life. A certain Giovanni da Spoleto, a professor of grammar at the university, is known to have been employed in this capacity for the lengthy period from 1396 until his retirement in 1445 (Rossi 1898; Goffis 1971); he was under contract to read the poem publicly on feast days. Thus, Dantesque allusions in the present panel would hardly have been lost on a Sienese public well versed in the *Divine Comedy*.

CS

32 b. Paradise

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on canvas, transferred from wood. 46.5 × 40.3 cm. The paint surface has been cut on the right side, where a painted border has been added over remnants of the original composition to make the scene appear complete. There are traces of the original border on the other three sides. Despite transfer, much of the original appearance of the surface of the picture is preserved due to Giovanni di Paolo's use of a canvas between the panel and the gesso; the canvas was transferred with the paint surface.

The orange trees, flowers, and hares in this garden of Paradise are much the same as in the Garden of Eden in the Lehman panel. Groups of saints and angels, several of whom can be identified, are shown embracing each other. In the top row, the Cistercian saint in white is Giles; the doe behind him is his symbol. In the center row, from the left, an angel greets the Sienese Ambrogio



Sansedoni, who has a dove at his ear (Sansedoni's burial chapel was in San Domenico, close to the Guelfi altar). In the center, Augustine is reunited with his mother, Monica. Below them, Peter Martyr, identified by his head wound, hugs another Dominican friar, and to their right, there are two *Mantellate*—Dominican nuns and followers of Catherine of Siena—and Anthony Abbot.

The garden and some of the same figures are repeated in the Paradise section of Giovanni di Paolo's late *Last Judgment* in the Siena Pinacoteca. The New York panel must have been organized along the same lines: Paradise on the left, hell on the right, and Christ the Judge and the heavenly glory in the center, with the resurrection of the dead below. The Siena *Last Judgment*, however, is quite unique, and cannot be considered a copy of the Guelfi *Last Judgment*. The naked children with bloody wounds—undoubtedly the Innocents massacred at Herod's order in Bethlehem—do not appear in the present fragment, nor is it likely that the unidentified penitent woman seated below Christ, who has no precedent in Last Judgment scenes, was included either. Moreover, in the upper right corner of the Metropolitan Museum *Paradise*, a stream of light bathes an angel or a young woman leading a youth, beneath whom a Dominican monk can be seen walking in the same direction. An analogy for the glowing light is to be found in Fra Angelico's *Last Judgment* of about 1431 (from the Oratorio degli Scolari—part of the Camaldolese monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence—now in the Museo di San Marco), where the golden light issues from the gate of a walled town representing the celestial city.

A miniature in the San Marco choir books helps explain the meaning of Angelico's picture (Watson 1979, p. 162, n. 35; ill. in Chiarelli 1968, pl. XXXIV). It shows souls released from Purgatory being dressed in white by an angel and then ascending toward the light-filled gate of Paradise. The text reads, "Requiem eterna dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis." In Fra Angelico's *Paradise*, purified souls are depicted as they proceed to the celestial city (the saints are already in heaven). This is particularly Dantesque in conception, in that the summit of Purgatory was earthly Paradise—as Matilda tells Dante: "Those ancients who in poetry presented / the golden age, who sang its happy state, / perhaps, in their Parnassus, dreamt this place. / Here, mankind's root was innocent; and here / were every fruit and never-ending spring; / these streams—the nectar of which poets sing" (*Purgatory* 28:139–144). Before joining the dance, the blessed have to cross a small stream, which probably refers to either one of the two purifying rivers in Dante's earthly Paradise: Lethe, which washes out the memory of all sin, or Euone, which restores the memory of all good deeds.

In Giovanni di Paolo's *Paradise* the light comes from the right, so that the souls that go toward it approach

the region usually reserved for heaven itself. Although Fra Angelico positioned the celestial city on the far left so as not to interfere with Christ and the saints in glory, Giovanni di Paolo seems to have opted for a more direct narrative sequence; he may have been influenced by the narrative methods of cassone paintings, in which architectural and landscape elements separated episodes. Beyond the light there may well have been an open gateway that led directly into Paradise. The division, in this case, would not be unlike the separation between the realms of love (of the secular kind) in Paolo Schiavo's cassone in the Yale University Art Gallery (Watson 1979, pl. 1). It is also the sort of compositional formula used to represent the entry into heaven in Andrea di Bonaiuto's 1366–67 fresco *The Way to Salvation* (Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence), in which the blessed, having been guided and cleansed by means of Dominican teaching and confession, enter heaven through an imposing city gate.

In Fra Angelico's *Paradise*, except for a Camaldolese and a Dominican monk, the blessed do not converse among themselves; only angels salute them. Yet, as was Giovanni di Paolo's wont, he highly personalized Paradise: Mother and son are reunited, colleagues and friends greet each other as if after a long absence, and heavenly life seems peacefully to pick up where life on earth left off.

CS

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN ALTARPIECE (catalogue 33 a–d)

33 a. The Coronation of the Virgin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera, silver, and gold on wood. 179.9 × 131.3 cm.
The panel has been thinned to 4 mm. and cradled.
The point of the arch is new. At the base of the panel,
between the two music-making angels, a rectangular
area approximately 30 cm. wide has been excised, filled,
and repainted to match the marbled pavement.

33 b. Saint Bartholomew, The Entombment of the Virgin, and the Mourning Virgin

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Tempera and gold on wood. 18.9 × 46.8 cm. (excluding
later additions of 3 cm. at the left and 3.1 cm. at the
right). The panel has a horizontal grain.





33 b



33 c



33 d

33 c. Christ as the Man of Sorrows

Peter Jay Sharp, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 25.5 × 38.5 cm. (excluding added strips). The panel, which has a horizontal grain, retains its original thickness of 2 cm. The original, lipped edge is intact at the top and the bottom.

33 d. The Mourning Saint John the Evangelist, The Assumption of the Virgin, and Saint Ansanus

El Paso Museum of Art

Tempera and gold on wood. 18.8 × 48.3 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain.

The *Coronation of the Virgin*, which is shown here together with its reconstructed predella, is one of the most sumptuous masterpieces of Giovanni di Paolo's maturity, combining a richness of surface and incisive drawing characteristic of his finest work. The predella, which treats the two events immediately preceding the Coronation of the Virgin, together with the Man of Sorrows mourned by the Virgin and Saint John, was convincingly reconstructed and associated with the Lehman panel by Pope-Hennessy (1987, pp. 118–20). Neither the provenance nor the period when the altarpiece was dismantled is known. However, two of the predella panels (cat. 33 b, d) belonged to Johann Anton Ramboux, who probably purchased them in Siena about 1838 (the *Coronation of the Virgin* cannot be traced prior to about 1890, when it belonged to Bardini in Florence: see Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 120). The equal widths of the *Coronation* and the reconstructed predella suggest that the altarpiece had no lateral elements but was, instead, completed with pilasters, possibly adorned with small figures of standing saints, below which would have been bases, conceivably decorated with figures of donors, saints, or coats of arms. The predella of Giovanni di Paolo's late altarpiece (1475) from the church of San Silvestro near Staggia (now in the Siena Pinacoteca) has a like format except that the mourning Virgin and John are included in the same picture field as the Christ in the tomb.

A rectangular area in the *Coronation of the Virgin*, above the position that the *Man of Sorrows* would have occupied, has been voided, filled, and repainted. It is possible that, on the example of Fra Angelico's San Marco altarpiece in Florence, this area once showed a *Crucifixion*, subsequently excised, but perhaps a more satisfactory explanation is that the area originally contained a tabernacle for the sacrament. There are parallels for this, beginning in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Such a tabernacle could, of course, have been added later; a Eucharistic tabernacle would have been particularly appropriate above a *Man of Sorrows*.

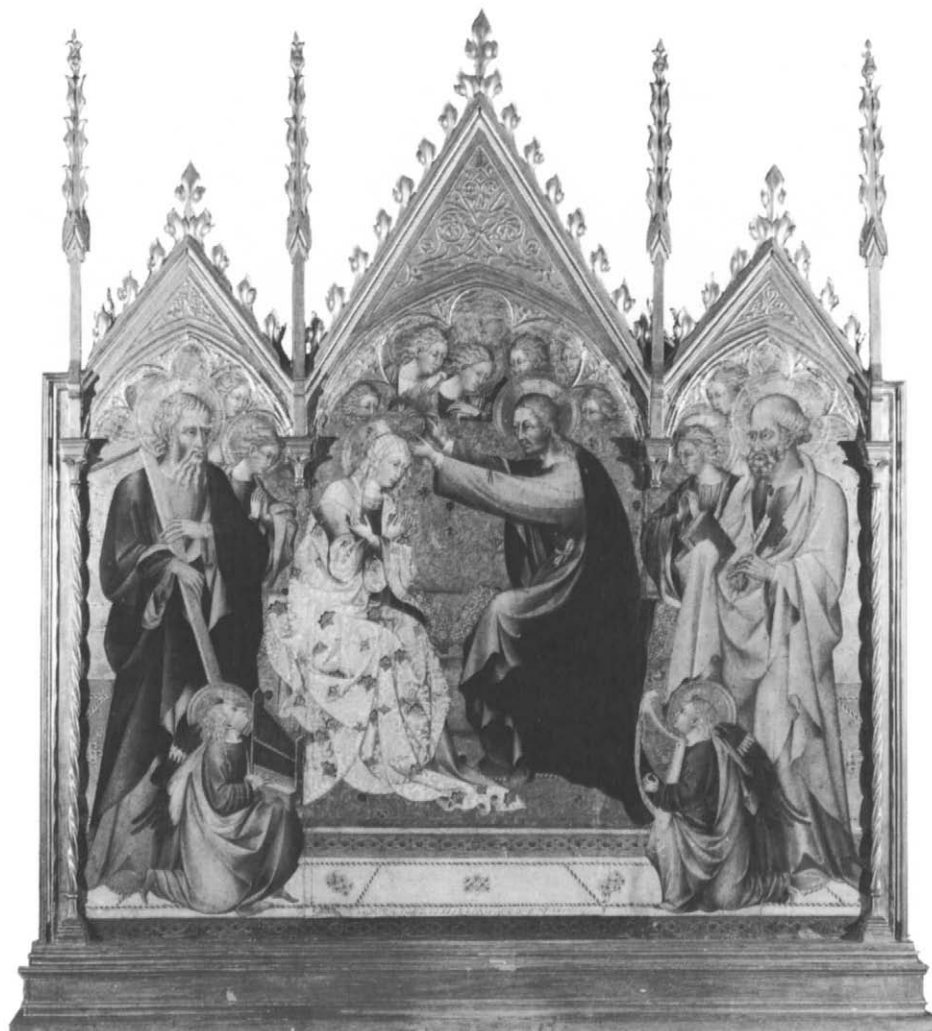


Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Sant'Andrea, Siena

The composition of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, with the Virgin and Christ seated obliquely on a bench over which a patterned cloth has been draped, has a tradition going back to Lippo Vanni's 1352 fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico. This was one of those paintings of Marian subjects that formed the iconographic canon of Sienese art. Probably because of Bernardino's promotion of traditional images of the Virgin, it was the object of renewed veneration in the mid-fifteenth century, and between 1444 and 1445 was repainted by Domenico di Bartolo and Sano di Pietro, who certainly adhered to the original scheme. Sano di Pietro repeated the design in an altarpiece of the early 1450s, now in the Siena Pinacoteca.

Giovanni di Paolo first treated the theme in a triptych showing the Coronation of the Virgin flanked by Saints Andrew and Peter (fig. 1), in the church of Sant'Andrea

in Siena. Signed and dated 1445, the center panel of this altarpiece is close in design to the Lehman *Coronation*. Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 118) has argued that the self-contained, more carefully structured composition of the Lehman panel, in which the heads of the Virgin and of Christ are raised effectively above the strongly defined form of the marble throne, stems from a rethinking of the Sant'Andrea altarpiece. A date of about 1455 for the *Coronation of the Virgin*—contemporary with the altarpiece to which the predella with scenes of Saint Clare (cat. 34 a, b) belonged—is likely. Typical of Giovanni, who frequently returned to compositional motifs sometimes years after he first used them, the cartoons of the music-making angels were reused in a later altarpiece in the church at Poggioferro.

CS

THE SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 34 a, b)

Four panels with scenes from the Life of the thirteenth-century Franciscan Saint Clare of Assisi (1193?–1255), two of which are included here, have long been recognized as having formed part of a single predella. As suggested by Keith Christiansen (verbal communication), these panels probably were originally below the saints in an altarpiece (255 × 183 cm.; Siena Pinacoteca; see fig. 3) depicting the Madonna and Child Enthroned, with the Redeemer above, and, from left to right, Saints Peter Damian (wearing a bishop's mantle over a Camaldolese monk's habit), Thomas the Apostle (holding a dagger, the symbol of his martyrdom in India), Clare, and Ursula (holding a banner). The altarpiece is related in style, and its lateral panels are approximately 29.5 cm. wide, corresponding to the width of the predella panels. These panels show Saint Francis investing Clare with her habit (20.5 × 29.5 cm.; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem; see fig. 1), Saint Clare blessing the bread before Pope Innocent IV (cat. 34 a), Saint Clare rescuing the shipwrecked (20.5 × 29.5; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem; see fig. 2), and Saint Clare saving a child from a wolf (cat. 34 b). The center panel has not been identified, but its subject may have been the Crucifixion.

This reconstructed altarpiece is somewhat later than the *Saint Nicholas of Bari* polyptych (Siena Pinacoteca), which is dated 1453. The slim, elegant figures in that painting have acquired the more rotund and slightly top-heavy anatomy characteristic of the artist's later works—especially apparent in the Madonna and Child, and in the figure of Saint Thomas. Stylistically, the predella relates to the surviving narrative scenes associable with the Montepulciano *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* altarpiece of 1456: The scene of Saint Clare rescuing the shipwrecked especially bears comparison with the *Saint*

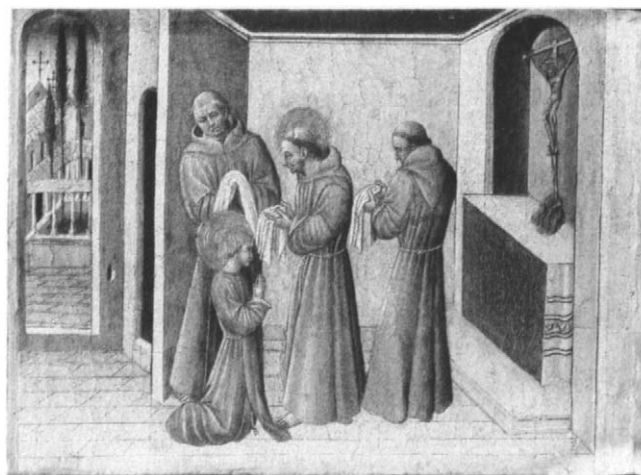


Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *Saint Francis Investing Clare with Her Habit*. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem



Figure 2. Giovanni di Paolo. *Saint Clare Rescuing the Shipwrecked*. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem

Nicholas of Tolentino Saving a Ship in Distress in the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum. The *Saint Clare* altarpiece must date from the later 1450s.

The provenance of the altarpiece is not known, but it was obviously commissioned for a church of the Poor Clares. In the fifteenth century, there were four communities of Poor Clares in Siena: Santa Petronilla, San Lorenzo, Santa Chiara, and San Niccolò (Bughetti 1917, p. 446). Giovanni di Paolo had worked for the order at least once before; the above-mentioned *Saint Nicholas of Bari* altarpiece of 1453 is undoubtedly from San Niccolò—then the most important Clarissan convent—which was founded and patronized by the powerful Petroni family. However, the art patronage of the other convents has not been investigated fully enough to determine the origin of the *Saint Clare* altarpiece.

The presence of Saint Peter Damian (1007–1072) may



Figure 3. Giovanni di Paolo. *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter Damian, Thomas the Apostle, Clare, and Ursula*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

represent an early example of the historical confusion over the dedication of San Damiano in Assisi. This was the church where Saint Francis was converted, and where Saint Clare was invested (the Berlin panel with this subject would have been placed beneath Peter Damian's image) and her first community established. During Clare's life, the nuns were known as *Damiane*, after the church. The dedication is to Damian the Early Christian martyr, but some later historians asserted that it was to Peter Damian (see Bracaloni 1926, p. 3, n. 2). The misunderstanding may already have been current in the fifteenth century, resulting in the inclusion of this saint in a Clarissan altarpiece. The dagger as an attribute of Saint Thomas the Apostle is traditionally Siennese; he appears as such in Niccolò di Ser Sozzo and Luca di Tommè's altarpiece (Siena Pinacoteca), the predella of which included scenes of his mission and martyrdom in India.

All four predella scenes are taken from episodes in Saint Clare's official biography, written by Tommaso da Celano (1195–1261) at Pope Alexander IV's request in 1257, and based on the acts of the canonization process (Lazzeri 1920, pp. 197–98). The book enjoyed a wide circulation: Unlike Celano's writings about Saint Francis, it was not suppressed. A copy of her legend is inventoried in the fifteenth-century library of San Francesco (Humphreys 1978, p. 162). Undoubtedly, during Giovanni di Paolo's time copies were to be found in any of the several communities of Poor Clares in Siena. In the first two scenes, which represent events during the saint's life, Giovanni di Paolo carefully followed the narrative, whereas in the third scene, which illustrates a posthumous miracle, he allowed the overpowering storm waves, which almost engulf the ship, to dominate.



34 a. A Miracle of Saint Clare

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

Tempera and gold on wood. 21.6 × 30.2 cm.; painted surface 19.6 × 27.8 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, is 1.1 cm. thick. The paint surface has not been cropped, and there is an extension of wood, overpainted, on all sides.

Pope Innocent IV visited Clare when she was very ill and nearing the end of her life. Before dining, he asked her to bless the bread. She knelt and made the sign of the cross over the loaves and the cruciform was so imprinted on them that they broke into four parts (Lazzeri 1920, pp. 147–48).

The subject of the scene is highly unusual, and, together with the fact that, in the main section of the altarpiece, Clare holds a majolica pyx with a winged cherubim—a symbol of the Eucharist—demonstrates the patron's concern with Eucharistic questions. The pyx refers to an incident during the Saracen siege of Assisi: When Clare's

conventual church of San Damiano was threatened she displayed the Host, and thereby scattered the invaders (this rare episode from the life of the saint is represented in a thirteenth-century Sienese painting from the circle of Guido da Siena, in the Siena Pinacoteca).

The altarpiece was executed at a time when the Franciscan and Dominican orders were involved in an acrimonious debate over the issue of the Sacred Blood of Christ, during which some Franciscans were even accused of heresy. As the Eucharistic feast of Corpus Domini and the practice of adoring the Host, promoted by the Dominicans, were gaining an ever-increasing foothold in Sienese religious life, the selection of the saint's attribute and the subject of the Yale predella panel can be attributed to a Franciscan desire to historicize their orthodoxy with regard to these questions through Saint Clare.

CS



34 b. Saint Clare of Assisi Saving a Child from a Wolf

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
Edith A. and Percy S. Straus Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 20.6 × 29.2 cm.; painted surface 19.4 × 28.1 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed. The paint surface has not been cropped, and there is an extension of bare wood on all sides.

The painting illustrates a posthumous miracle of Clare narrated in Tommaso da Celano's biography of the saint. In the written version of the miracle, a rapacious wolf mauled a child about the head and carried him into the woods. Warned by vineyard workers of the child's cries, his mother, Buona of Monte Galliano (near Assisi), who had already lost one son to a wolf, prayed to Saint Clare, threatening to drown herself if this son also perished. Meanwhile, the workers rushed into the forest and found the wolf gone and a dog licking the child's wounds.

Giovanni di Paolo reduced the narrative to its essential elements, ignoring details that might confuse the dramatic impact of the picture. The head wound has become a severed arm, and the workers and the dog have been eliminated altogether. The wolf is also shown dead. The gridded pattern of the fields, dotted with an occasional mountain, recedes into the far distance, creating a panoramic backdrop that suggests the helpless isolation of the mother and son.

Because of the real threat that wolves posed, stories relating to their taming or to being rescued from them were a common topos in hagiographical literature, and a depiction like this one must have fascinated contemporaries. The Blessed Agostino Novello saving a child from a wolf is depicted in an altarpiece by Simone Martini of about 1329 (originally in the church of Sant'Agostino, now on deposit in the Siena Pinacoteca), and a wolf episode is also included by Sano di Pietro in an altarpiece of 1449 (Siena Pinacoteca) from the church of San Biagio in Scrofiano.

CS



35. The Adoration of the Magi

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 27 × 23.2 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned. There are traces of the original, lipped edge on all sides, and remnants of a gilt molded border at the upper left.

This enchanting picture is the latest of four known depictions by Giovanni di Paolo of the Adoration of the Magi. The others are in the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller in Otterlo, The Netherlands; The Cleveland Museum of Art; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. All derive to some extent from Gentile da Fabriano's altarpiece of 1423 from the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Trinità, Florence (now in the Uffizi). However, in the Linsky painting Giovanni has distanced himself somewhat from that model, reducing the size of the Magi's entourage and emphasizing the deep landscape background. Perhaps the most affecting innovation is the action of the young king, who embraces Joseph. There is an analogy for this unusual detail in the predella of Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* altarpiece in Cortona, which dates to about 1430, as well as in some later depictions from his workshop. Cardile (1976, pp. 130, 140, n. 45) has suggested that the literary source may be a sermon, "In epiphania domini," by the Florentine Dominican Observant archbishop Antonino. On the authority of Saint Bernard, Antonino claimed that Joseph did not keep the Magi's gifts, but distributed them to the poor. The relationship of the sermon to the picture is not self-evident. Rather, the intent of Fra Angelico and of Giovanni di Paolo seems to have been simply to involve Joseph more directly in the story and to endow the scene with a greater sense of intimacy. However, another unknown literary text may have inspired the two artists.

A further innovation is the replacement by Giovanni di Paolo of the rocky grotto, traditional in Sienese representations of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, with a thatch-roofed stable. Christiansen (1983–84, pp. 26–29) has proposed that Giovanni's compositional model for this motif and for other details may have been Uccello's ruined fresco of the Nativity from San Martino alla Scala, Florence (on deposit in the Uffizi). San Martino alla Scala was a dependency of the Sienese Spedale della Scala (Paatz 1952, pp. 133–37), and Uccello's fresco was thus a commission for a Sienese institution. Unfortunately, the date of the fresco is not known, although the building history of San Martino suggests a *terminus post quem* of about 1440, and the fresco undoubtedly post-dates Uccello's design of 1442–43 for a stained-glass window of the Nativity for the cathedral of Florence. In contrast to the San Martino fresco, Giovanni di Paolo did not concern himself with showing the stable in

strong foreshortening—in this respect the stable in the Linsky *Adoration* is closer to the one in a fresco by Uccello in the church of San Martino, Bologna, and in miniatures by the Boucicaut Master—although he did depict the thatched roof from below, with the geometric, patterned landscape seen through it. The question of Uccello's influence on Giovanni di Paolo's landscapes has not been thoroughly investigated, but it would seem that in the 1450s and early 1460s Giovanni became aware of compositions in which the foreground and background are drawn from different viewing points. In the Linsky *Adoration* the foreground, middle ground, and background are juxtaposed so as to give the impression of a progression into an increasingly distant space without, however, defining a spatial continuum. The importance of this effect is evident in the incised lines of the thatched roof and of the rectangular fields in the background. These preparatory lines also indicate that the three distant hills were initially placed higher in the picture field.

The same stable and landscape background recur in a *Nativity* (27.9 × 24.1 cm.) by Giovanni di Paolo in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge. That panel and one in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, of the *Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple* (27.5 × 23.9 cm.) have long been recognized as from the same predella as the Linsky *Adoration*. Pope-Hennessy (1937, pp. 90–91, 93) further suggested that a *Baptism of Christ* (25.7 ×

Giovanni di Paolo



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Presentation in the Temple*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

35.7 cm.) in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, was the center panel of this predella, but the hypothesis has proven to be incorrect, since the Ashmolean *Baptism* was described by Brogi in 1862 (1897, p. 305) as part of another altarpiece (see cat. 36). A *Baptism* could, nonetheless, have been included after the *Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple*, with three scenes of Christ's Passion balancing those devoted to his infancy. This would make the predella about 180 cm., excluding the raised, gilt divisions between the individual scenes. Alternatively, Christiansen (verbal communication) has suggested that a *Crucifixion* (26.6 × 33 cm.) at Christ Church, Oxford, was the center of the predella, with the *Nativity* and *Adoration* on the left, and the *Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple* and a fifth, unidentified scene at the right.

The most likely candidate for the main panel of the altarpiece to which this predella belonged is Giovanni di Paolo's *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (167 × 150 cm.; see fig. 1) from Colle di Val d'Elsa (Siena Pinacoteca; Christiansen 1983–84, p. 46). The composition of this panel is a repetition of Giovanni's altarpiece of 1447–49 for the guild of the Pizzicaiuoli (see cat. 38 a–m) and, like that work, is based on Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation* of 1342 (Uffizi, Florence) for the cathedral of Siena. A Christological cycle would be an appropriate subject for the predella of a *Presentation* altarpiece, although neither Ambrogio's nor Giovanni's for the Pizzicaiuoli had such a predella. The floor tiles in the *Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple* are of the same color as those in the Colle di Val d'Elsa *Presentation*, but differ in tonality from those in the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece. Pilasters would have completed the altarpiece and made up for the difference in dimensions between the predella and the main panel.

The provenance of the Colle di Val d'Elsa *Presentation* cannot, unfortunately, be traced prior to 1862, when the painting was recorded by Brogi (1897, p. 160) in the nuns' cloistered choir in the Conservatorio di San Pietro. It was brought to the Siena Pinacoteca in 1941. The Conservatorio in Colle di Val d'Elsa would not have been the original location because it was not founded until about 1603/4 by the Bishop of Arezzo, Pietro Usimbaseri (Biadi 1859, pp. 299–301). There is no other surviving record of the altarpiece, such as in a pastoral visit, prior to the date of Brogi's inventory (I would like to thank Don Veris Consumi of the Archivio Arcivescovile, Colle di Val d'Elsa, for his assistance). Since the Conservatorio belonged to Augustinian nuns from Santa Monica, Florence, the *Presentation* most likely came from one of their convents. The altarpiece is signed IOHANNES DAL POGGIO, a reference to the Siennese district of Poggio Malavolti where Giovanni di Paolo lived. This very local allusion might suggest that the altarpiece was painted for a

church in Siena and later moved to Colle di Val d'Elsa.

The Colle di Val d'Elsa *Presentation* clearly was painted several years after the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece of 1447–49, and must be dated to the mid- to late 1450s; the spatial coherence of the *Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple* can hardly predate the scenes from the Life of Saint Catherine (cat. 38 a–j), which were probably painted after 1461.

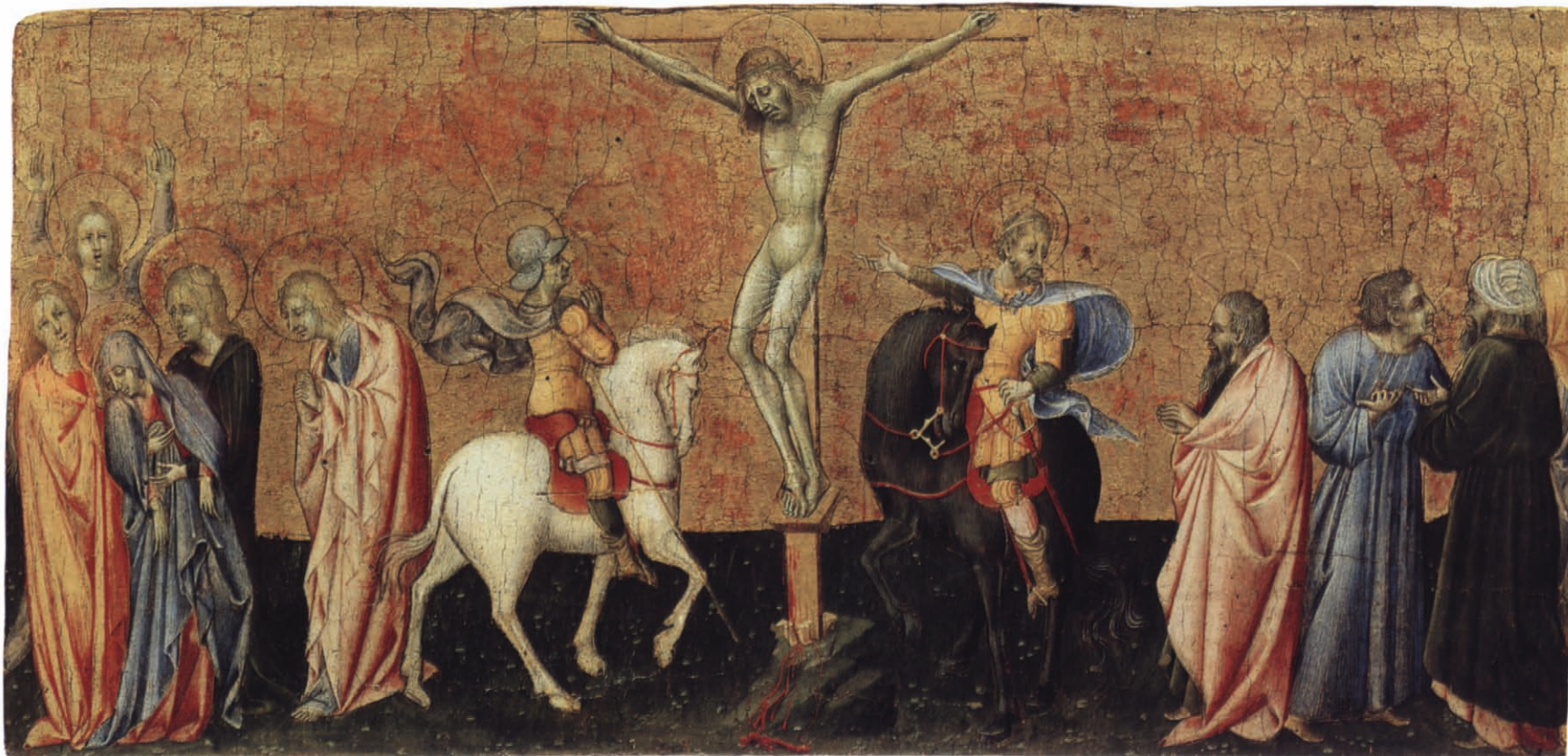
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THE PREDELLA TO THE COMPAGNIA DEGLI ARTISTI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 36 a–c)

In his inventory of works of art in Montepulciano, compiled in 1862, Brogi (1897, p. 305) described in detail five panels in the Compagnia degli Artisti that apparently all belonged to a single altarpiece: "Saint John the Baptist baptizing Christ in the Jordan . . . 29 [cm.] high, 36 [cm.] wide.—The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ . . . a panel in tempera with a gold ground, 29 [cm.] high, 54 [cm.] wide.—Saint John the Apostle in a caldron of oil . . . a panel 29 [cm.] high, 36 [cm.] wide.—The Virgin Annunciate . . . A pointed panel, 106 [cm.] high, 42 [cm.] wide.—The Annunciatory Angel . . . Figure and panel similar to the preceding.—XV century. Giovanni di Paolo." The second and third of these scenes can be identified with two of the pictures shown here (cat. 36 a, b), and the first-mentioned work with a *Baptism of Christ* in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (25.3 × 35.8 cm.; see fig. 1). The two panels with the Annunciation are lost. Pope-Hennessy (1987, pp. 125–27) convincingly proposed that the fragmentary Lehman panel of Saint John the Evangelist Raising Drusiana was from the same predella. The altarpiece to which it belonged must have been



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Baptism of Christ*. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



36 a

dedicated to Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. Given the orientation of the architecture in the Lehman scene and the small dimensions of the panel, it was probably positioned beneath a pilaster on the right side of the altarpiece. The *Crucifixion*, wider than the other panels, would have been in the middle, probably under an image of the Madonna and Child. Saint John the Evangelist would have flanked the center panel on the right, with the Baptist on the left. There must have been at least two other lateral saints, and as many as three further predella panels. The subjects of the other predella panels may have been the Birth and the Beheading of the Baptist, and the Evangelist on Patmos or his bodily ascension into heaven. The pairing of scenes from the lives of the two saints in a single altarpiece was not uncommon—as Giotto’s fresco cycle in the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence, attests.

The location of the altarpiece in what, in the nineteenth century, was the Venerabile Compagnia degli Artisti must have been its original one. The chapel of this organization occupied the site of the former church of San Giovanni del Poggiolo (Fumi 1894, p. 44), founded in 1332 as the Montepulciano seat of the Silvestrine order—a branch of the Benedictines. The probable size of the re-

constructed polyptych and its subject matter suggest that it was once on the high altar of the church. Not much is known about the Silvestrine order’s activity in Montepulciano, or about their art patronage. The dedication of the church to Saint John, of course, dictated the principal subjects of its decorative program. In one of the Silvestrine churches in Siena, probably San Giovanni della Staffa and not Santo Spirito, as has been proposed, there was an altarpiece by Segna da Bonaventura (now divided between the Metropolitan Museum and the Sacro Convento di San Francesco, Assisi) whose four lateral panels included figures of each Saint John (see Zeri and Gardner 1980, pp. 88–89). The other main figures were Saint Benedict and the Blessed Silvester Gozzolini (1177–1267), the order’s founder. It is probable that this altarpiece was the iconographic model for Giovanni’s polyptych, and that the saints in both were the same.

Giovanni di Paolo was in Montepulciano in 1456, when he signed and dated an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino for an Augustinian monastery (the principal panel is now in the church of Sant’Agostino, but originally it could just as well have been in Santa Mustiola, the other local Augustinian community, which was incorporated with Sant’Agostino in the late

eighteenth century). Giovanni di Paolo was the Augustinians' preferred Siennese artist, having produced numerous commissions for them, including the 1454 altarpiece in the Metropolitan Museum, and other projects for Leceto (see cat. 30) and San Leonardo al Lago, and it is likely that through these commissions his work became known to other orders in Montepulciano. At the time, the town was under Florentine control, and Siennese artists had not worked there since 1401—the year that Taddeo di Bartolo completed an altarpiece for the high altar of the cathedral. Although there is no documentary evidence, Giovanni di Paolo may have come to Montepulciano following the political troubles over the exile of the Siennese allies of the condottiere Niccolò Piccinino in 1456, in which Mariano Bargagli, the superintendent of the cathedral, was implicated. In any case, the style of the Silvestrine altarpiece fits well within the period that encompassed the *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* altarpiece of 1456—when the commission for this second Montepulciano altarpiece may have been negotiated—and Giovanni's work of the early 1460s. Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 127) has noted the similarity of the architecture in the Lehman panel and in the Saint Catherine scenes (see cat. 38 a–j), which seem to date to after 1461.

CS

36 a. The Crucifixion

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.5 × 53.7 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain, and seems not to have been thinned. The engaged frame is modern.

At the left, the Virgin is shown fainting into the arms of the two Maries; behind them, the Magdalene lifts her arms in grief while John looks on. At the right, three Jews gesticulate among themselves, as a fourth looks at the haloed Roman centurion who points to Christ, indicating that he is the Son of God (Mark 15:39). The centurion Longinus is identified by his lance. (At some point in the panel's history, halos were mistakenly scratched above the heads of two of the Jews.) The composition, with a centurion on either side of the cross, is similar to that of the predella panel from the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece (cat. 38 k). Unlike the companion scenes (cat. 36 b, c), this predella panel has a gilt background.

CS

36 b. The Attempted Martyrdom of Saint John the Evangelist at Porta Latina

Dott. Lino Pasquali, Florence

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.9 × 35.2 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain.

The saint in the caldron has sometimes been identified as Ansanus because of his youthfulness (see Chelazzi Dini 1982, p. 362). Although John the Evangelist is frequently depicted as a bearded old man, as in the companion panel (cat. 36 c), representations of him as a young man are by no means uncommon, and precedents exist for his appearance in the present panel. Moreover, while there is a long literary and visual tradition for the attempted martyrdom of Saint John in a caldron of boiling oil, this is not true in the case of Saint Ansanus. By the eighth century at the latest, a Church feast on May 6 commemorated the attempt to martyr the saint in a caldron outside the Porta Latina in Rome, as ordered by the Roman emperor Domitian (some sources give Nero as the persecutor). After Saint John emerged unscathed, he was exiled to Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse (*The Golden Legend*, pp. 276–77).

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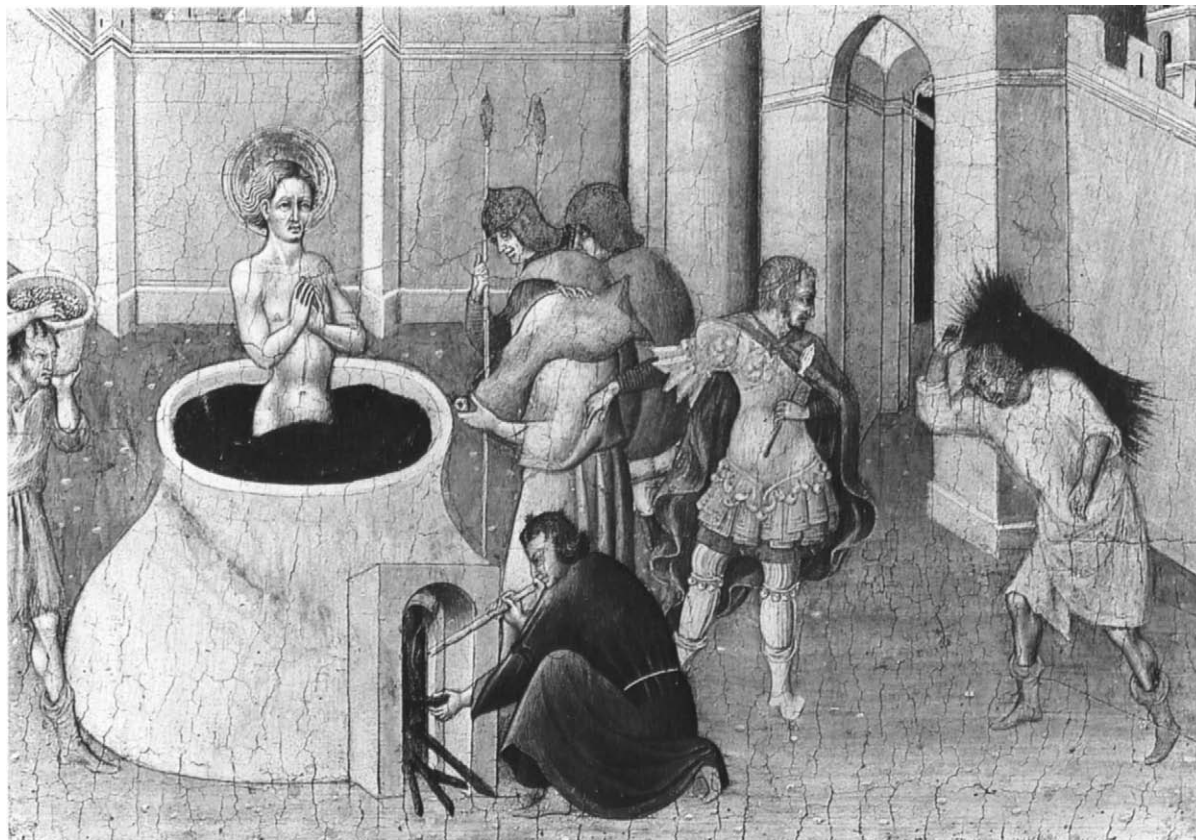
36 c. Saint John the Evangelist Raising Drusiana

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

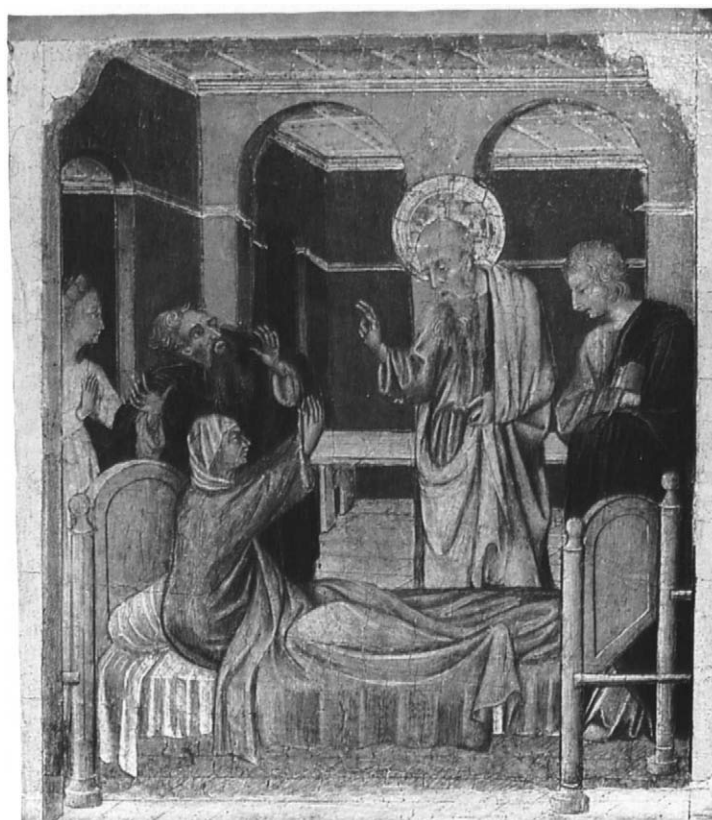
Tempera and gold on wood. 23.7 × 22.3 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been cut on all four sides, and strips that incorporate the paint surface have been added to the top and bottom. The surface is badly abraded, and has been retouched.

In an interior setting, an older, bearded and bald saint, in red and blue robes, raises a woman from the dead. He is accompanied by a younger man clasping a book, and by two other people who look on in wonder. The subject is somewhat problematic, but Reinach's suggestion (1918, p. 564) that the panel represents John the Evangelist raising Drusiana from the dead is the most likely—even though it does not exactly follow literary and visual tradition. In *The Golden Legend* (pp. 58–59), the Raising of Drusiana occurs during her funeral procession outside the city gates of Ephesus, where John has just returned from his exile on Patmos. This is how the event is represented by Giotto in his fresco in the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence, as well as in most subsequent Florentine paintings. It would seem that Giovanni di Paolo wanted to simplify the scene, possibly because of the small dimensions of the panel. The fact that the risen woman is shown on a portable bier suggests that her funeral is taking place. It should be noted that the elderly appearance of Saint John makes sense here, since the episode happened many years after his attempted martyrdom outside the Porta Latina.

CS



36 b



36 c



37. The Annunciation to Zacharias and The Angel of the Annunciation (verso)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. 75.8 × 43.2 cm. (excluding added strips at the bottom and sides). The panel has a vertical grain, and is 2.3 cm. thick. There are traces of the original, lipped edge on the right side and on the arch, where an extension of bare panel has been repainted. The gesso was applied directly to the wood without an intermediary layer of canvas, and this accounts for the smoothness of the paint surface. There are traces of silver (now tarnished) on the domes and windows; the clouds were also originally silvered. With the aid of infrared reflectography, an underdrawing is visible beneath the paint surface of the angel, whose left foot was slightly repositioned. On the reverse is a metal strip for a hinge 2.9 cm. wide and 29 cm. from the bottom of the panel; it was embedded in the wood, and covered by canvas and gesso. The marbled pavement on which the angel stands ends in a lipped edge. Below this is a border 2 cm. in height that still retains some traces of its original gilding, and below that are traces of a raised gesso decoration (*pastiglia*).

The scene illustrates the story in the Gospel of Saint Luke (1:5–25). While a multitude prayed outside the temple in which Zacharias was performing his priestly duties, an angel appeared to him. Although Zacharias was much troubled, the angel reassured him, foretelling the birth of a son who would be a prophet. The aged and childless Zacharias was incredulous. The angel revealed himself as Gabriel, and declared that Zacharias would be struck dumb until the prophesy was fulfilled. Interestingly, the Sienese Mass for the feast of the Birth of the Baptist on June 24 included a recitation of the Creed to commemorate Zacharias's incredulity that was usually omitted elsewhere (Lusini 1901, p. 11, note).

As is frequently the case with Giovanni di Paolo, the composition combines motifs from a number of sources. The figures of the angel and Zacharias derive from Jacopo della Quercia's bronze relief of the same subject on the Siena Baptistry font, while the architectural setting—with its tripartite division, its deep apse behind the altar, and the statuettes of armed men—has been taken over from Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple* (Uffizi, Florence), painted in 1342 for Siena Cathedral. However, whereas the façade in Lorenzetti's altarpiece is parallel to the picture plane, here it is polygonal (even though the pavement does not allow for this). Moreover, Giovanni has placed an elaborate Gothic tabernacle behind the altar similar to that found in Paolo di Giovanni Fei's *Presentation of the Virgin* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), painted about 1398 for the cathedral, and he has replaced the dome of Lorenzetti's temple with

one manifestly derived from Brunelleschi's cupola for the cathedral of Florence. Although this is the most impressive example, it is not the first instance in which the Florentine cupola inspired Giovanni. He recorded its appearance, when it was still under construction, in a miniature in *The Divine Comedy*, and the cupola is depicted in its completed form in the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece (see Pope-Hennessy 1987, pp. 123–24). Brunelleschi himself spent several months in Siena in 1443 (Prager 1968).

The Lehman scene is the first episode in what was Giovanni di Paolo's most ambitious narrative cycle. The series comprised twelve scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist, eleven of which survive (see fig. 1). These were distributed in four vertical rows of three scenes each. The left-hand set, read from left to right and top to bottom,



37: verso

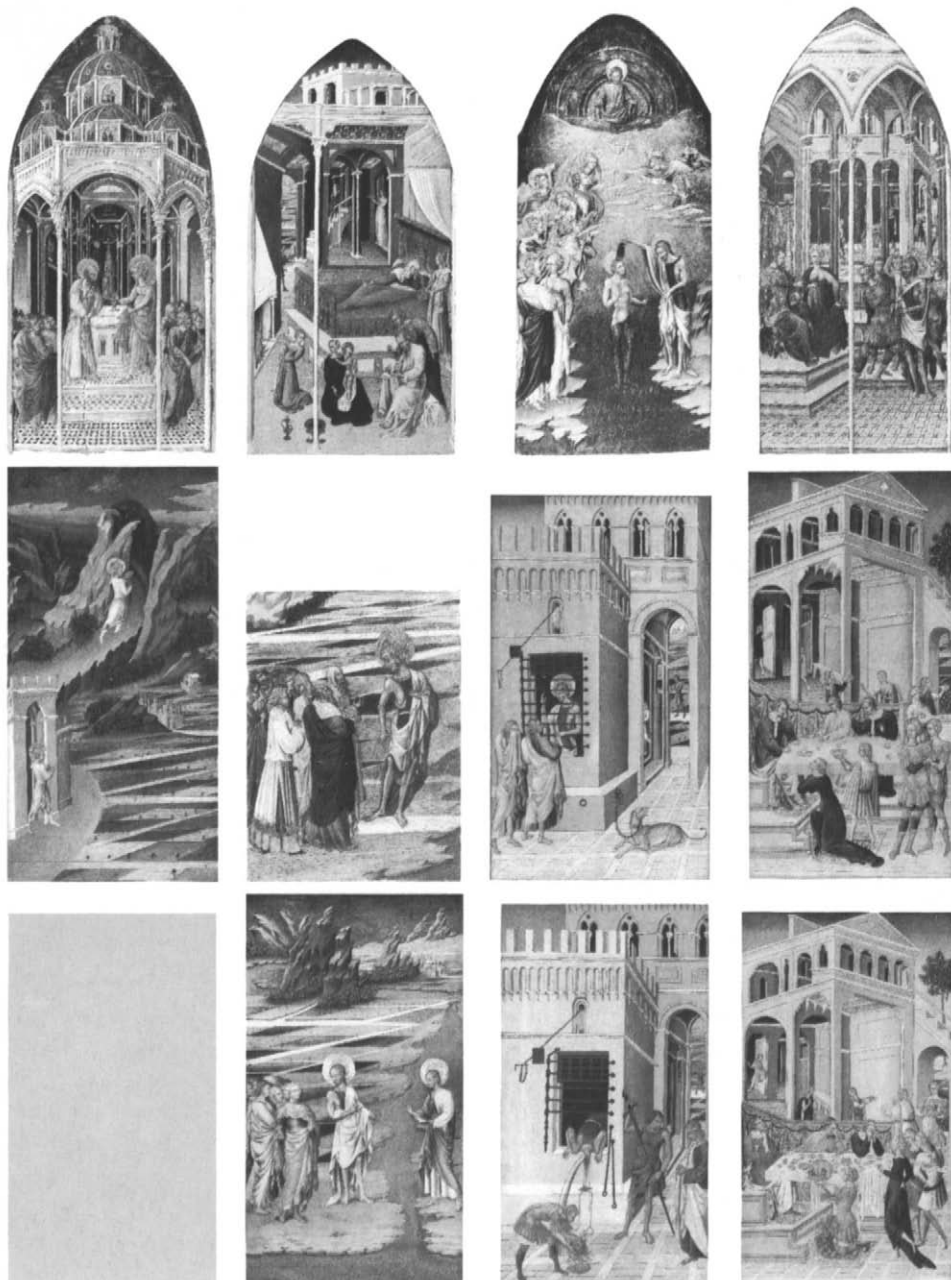


Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist* (reconstruction)

included: *The Annunciation to Zacharias*, *The Birth and Naming of John the Baptist* (74 × 35 cm.; Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster), *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (68.6 × 36.2 cm.; The Art Institute of Chicago), a (now-fragmentary) *Saint John Preaching* (40 × 30 cm.; Louvre, Paris), *The Baptism of the Multitude* (now lost), and the *Ecce Agnus Dei* (68.6 × 36.2 cm.; The Art Institute of Chicago). The right-hand set showed: *The Baptism of Christ* (75.7 × 33.4 cm.; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena), *Saint John Preaching before Herod* (74 × 35 cm.; Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster), *Saint John in Prison* (68.3 × 40 cm.; The Art Institute of

Chicago), *The Banquet of Herod* (69.1 × 36 cm.; The Art Institute of Chicago), *The Beheading of the Baptist* (68.7 × 39.1 cm.; The Art Institute of Chicago), and *The Presentation of the Baptist's Head to Herod* (68.6 × 40 cm.; The Art Institute of Chicago). Overall, the complex measured about 220 × 150 cm.

The reverse of the Lehman panel bears important physical evidence for reconstructing the function of the series. A badly damaged figure of the angel of the Annunciation, Gabriel, striding across a marbleized pavement is depicted. An iron band, originally covered but now exposed, must have served as a hinge, suggesting that the scenes formed two movable wings, like a double door; each wing may also have folded in half.

With the exception of the Norton Simon *Baptism of Christ*, which retains traces of what appears to be a red bole preparation on its reverse, the other panels are either cradled or planed. The reverse of the *Saint John Preaching before Herod*, positioned opposite the Lehman panel, would have contained the complementary Virgin Annunciate, so that, when closed, the *Annunciation* would have been visible. The other panels could have formed a cycle of scenes from the Life of Christ, or, more probably, a nonfigurative decorative scheme. *The Golden Legend* (1941 ed., p. 323) notes the significance of the fact that the same archangel announced the birth of both Christ and of the Baptist.

The function and original location of the series is not known, although a number of theories have been advanced. Brandi (1947, p. 44) suggested that the wings enclosed the aperture of the apse behind the baptismal font in the Siena Baptistery. However, it is doubtful that the Baptistery would have had two full cycles devoted to the saint's life: The bronze reliefs on the font already served that purpose. Moreover, Giovanni di Paolo's scenes would have been redundant, in that many details derive from the reliefs. Bacci (1941, pp. 32–34) proposed that the series might come from the destroyed church of Sant'Egidio, in which the altar dedicated to the Baptist was endowed by the artist in his will of 1477. As attractive as this hypothesis might be, it is fanciful. Carli (1961, pp. 163–74) theorized that the wings flanked a *Crucifixion*, of which two fragments by Giovanni di Paolo of the seated and mourning Virgin and Saint John (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) come from San Giovanni Battista della Morte. These images may have been cut from a large panel of the *Crucifixion*; they might have been part of a silhouetted crucifix, of which examples by Lorenzo Monaco and Fra Angelico are known in Florence; or perhaps they were placed below some venerated, sculpted crucifix. In any case, chronological considerations overrule the association of the Saint John the Baptist scenes with the painted *Crucifixion* fragments, which are earlier in date.

Eisenberg (1977, p. 143, n. 1) has made by far the most logical proposal, advancing the theory that they were part of a cupboard or *custodia* that contained a sacred object such as a sculpture or reliquary. The vertical proportions of the pictures would support such a function, for which there are precedents in Sienese art: a series of forty-eight scenes from the Life of Christ, in the church of Spedaletto in the Val d'Orcia (now in the Museo Diocesano, Pienza), the sacristy cupboard by Benedetto di Bindo for the cathedral of Siena (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), and the reliquary cupboard by Vecchietta for the ex-reliquary chapel in the Spedale della Scala (now in the Siena Pinacoteca).

Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 123) suggested that the panels may have enclosed a niche containing a sculpture of the Baptist, for which there are two obvious candidates: Donatello's bronze statue (fig. 2) delivered to the cathedral in 1457 but not installed until much later in the Cappella di San Giovanni, constructed between 1486 and 1504 (Lusini 1939, pp. 123–38); and the polychrome wood figure by Francesco di Giorgio (fig. 3), made in 1464 for the Compagnia di San Giovanni della Morte (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)—a lay confraternity that succored condemned criminals. The fact that seven of the panels deal with the Baptist's arrest, imprisonment, and death lends support to a provenance from San Giovanni Battista della Morte.

There is an additional possibility that the panels were the doors of the cupboard that contained the reliquary of the right arm of the Baptist, which was brought to Siena in 1464. Pope Pius II negotiated its sale from the brother of the last Byzantine emperor, Thomas Palaeologus, despot of Morea, and presided over its ceremonial donation to the cathedral on May 6, 1464, in the presence of eight cardinals. Thereafter, an annual procession of the relic was held on the Baptist's feast day (Lusini 1939, pp. 94–96). Shortly after the purchase, a cassone was made for it (Lusini 1939, p. 94). The following year, a new reliquary, called a *cassetta* in the documents (Lusini 1939, pp. 100–101), was designed by the Sienese goldsmith Francesco d'Antonio. It was displayed only during the feast; otherwise, it was locked in the cassone. That cassone was not elaborate: A new one, made by Giuliano di Bartolomeo in 1471, is described as of simple wood (*noce ferrato*: Lusini 1939, p. 102). Undoubtedly, the cassone was kept in a larger cabinet, and, given the relic's importance, it is possible that the cabinet was specially designed. Documents have not come to light concerning any reliquary cupboard by Giovanni di Paolo, but sources suggest that a cupboard did exist, and that it had a double door.

First, there is the 1482 inventory of the cathedral's property (Borghesi and Banchi 1898, pp. 261–330). Although it does not mention a cupboard (the inventory

does not even list the cupboard by Benedetto di Bindo, known to have been in the sacristy), there are entries for objects that were in, or part of, the cassone. For the inventory they were brought out and placed in the central chapel of the sacristy. Besides the reliquary (Borghesi and Banchi 1898, pp. 262–63), which is described in a separate section listing all the cathedral's relics, these objects consisted of a painted and gilded wood statue of the Baptist, one *braccio*- and -a-half high, and two painted and gilded angels with candelabra, of the same height. The inventory notes that they were “in sul cassone del braccio di sancto Giovanni Baptista” (Borghesi and Banchi 1898, pp. 282–83), which seems to suggest that they were placed on top of the cassone but could also be separated from it. Inside the cassone was a luxurious *davanzale*, an object donated by Count Capacci (Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 305; on Count Capacci, see Nardi 1975).

The second source, which describes how the cassone was stored, is the record of Bossio's pastoral visit to the cathedral in 1575 (f. 25 r). According to this, the cassone was kept in a special space, or small room (*stantiam*), seemingly not large enough for a man actually to enter, closed off by two doors reached by two stone steps. This was just outside the sacristy and near the chapel of Saint Bernardino, adjacent to the Cappella di San Giovanni. At this time the relic was enclosed in three cases: of iron, wood, and silver and gold (the reliquary itself).

The evident importance of Giovanni di Paolo's cycle of pictures strongly suggests that they were made to house something of great significance—such as the relic of Saint John's arm. The major impediment to this theory is the date it implies for their execution. Proposed dates range from about 1436 to 1460 (for a review, see Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 123), and although a date at the later end of this spectrum can now be reasonably accepted, it is difficult to argue for one much after the Saint Catherine scenes (cat. 38 a–j) of about 1461 and the Pienza altarpiece of 1462. There is, however, the possibility that the pictures were commissioned before the arrival of the relic in 1464. In 1459, Thomas and Constantine Palaeologus were in Mantua and already in touch with Cardinal Bessarion, who later authenticated the relic of John's right arm and purchased another relic for himself, which he gave to the Scuola della Carità in Venice, and for which Gentile Bellini painted the cabinet door (now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). After the collapse of Trebizond, the final outpost of the Byzantine Empire, in 1461, Thomas Palaeologus returned to Italy hawking relics—of which the head of Saint Andrew was the most famous. At this time, negotiations for the relic of Saint John's arm were probably finalized. It was only because of Pius's affection for his native land that the town of Siena was able to obtain it. The relic was very costly, and funds had to be raised. Its acquisition may



Figure 2. Donatello. *Saint John the Baptist*. Cappella di San Giovanni, Cathedral, Siena



Figure 3. Francesco di Giorgio. *Saint John the Baptist*. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena

have been foreseen some years before: From at least the time of the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the West must have been aware that relics would be for sale. Coincidentally, in 1457, Donatello's bronze figure of Saint John (fig. 2) was delivered to the cathedral without the right arm. If the Sienese had already decided to buy the relic of John's right arm, that part of the statue might have been reserved for completion after the relic's arrival, in a plan that was never realized. The panels and the statue originally may have been commissioned in connection with the relic. In a document of 1486 relating to the construction of the new Cappella di San Giovanni, where the Donatello was placed, the chapel is called the "cappella del braccio" (Lusini 1939, p. 123).

Part of the problem in dating the pictures lies in our understanding of Giovanni di Paolo's methods of narrative painting, and in the fact that his figurative style on a small scale changes little after the late 1440s. Also, the tall and narrow proportions of the panels demanded solutions different from those required by any other known works by the artist. In this regard, it should be noted that the predella panels with scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist (in the National Gallery, London), which are rectangular, contain basically the same figural compositions. In the series under discussion, these compositions are adapted to the lower parts, and architecture and landscape fill the upper sections of the panels. The fact that details in the compositions are taken from the reliefs on the Siena Baptistery font, completed in the mid-1420s, makes the dating of both sets of Baptist stories even more complicated.

Davies (1961, pp. 243–45) has rejected his own proposal that the London panels formed the predella of the Metropolitan Museum's altarpiece of 1453. It seems, however, that they, in fact, did (see also Pope-Hennessy 1988). In analyzing the dimensions, Davies failed to allow for the border elements, or for the fact that John occupies the place of honor in the altarpiece, to the Virgin's right. Even if the London panels can now be dated to 1453, this does not establish their precedence over the other series. However, as Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 123) has noted, the system of projection in the large series is similar to that in a panel representing a miracle of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino from the Montepulciano altarpiece of 1456 (now in the Gemäldegalerie der Akademie, Vienna) and of the much later *Saint Jerome Appearing to Saint Augustine* of about 1465–70 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem). The Saint John scenes can, therefore, be reasonably dated after the London predella of 1453. Yet, whether they are as late in date as the mid-1460s is another matter. One of the few clues to a late date is the somewhat classicizing figure of the disciple to Saint John's right in the *Ecce Agnus Dei*, which is reminiscent of the sculpture of Federighi.

CS

THE SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA SERIES (catalogue 38 a–m)

In 1447, the guild of the Pizzicaiuoli, purveyors of dry goods, commissioned an altarpiece from Giovanni di Paolo for their new chapel dedicated to the Purification of the Virgin, in the church of the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala. Because the Pizzicaiuoli manufactured candles, they oversaw the celebrations for the feast of the Purification (February 2), for which candles were distributed. These celebrations centered around the altar (Fecini in Muratori XV, vi, p. 857), where, according to the organization's 1539 statutes, an all-night vigil was held on the eve of the feast, and the feast-day procession began (*Breve*, ff. 7, 8).

The contract states that the altarpiece was to be readied by All Saints' Day (November 1) 1449. The subject is not specified, but the document makes it clear that the content and the form of the altarpiece had been discussed and agreed upon: "in illa forma et compositione, figuris et storiis eidem magistro Johanni per dictos rectores demonstrandis et assignandis" (Imbreviature di ser Giovanni Merlari 1442–50, II, f. 90; given incompletely in Milanesi 1854, II, pp. 241–42, and fully in Bacci 1941, pp. 23–24). "Figuris et storiis" implies that full-size figures and narrative scenes, as occur in a predella, were intended.

The new altar was not entirely successful: In a seventeenth-century note, reported by Gallavotti Cavallero (1985, p. 192), the guild's rectors registered their dissatisfaction with the effect of the painting on the altar and, within a few years, asked that it be replaced by another with a dedication to Saint Michael the Archangel. However, the main panel of the painting was retained, and was described in 1575 by Bossio (c. 114; published partially in Brandi 1933, p. 96) as on the altar dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel: "Before the said altar is the picture of the Story of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. . . . The candlemakers and dry goods purveyors customarily offer twenty-five pounds of candles on the Day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. . . ." Bossio certainly meant the Purification of the Virgin, and not her Presentation; the Purification occurred on the same day as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The altar was not very well maintained at that time because Bossio reported that the holy stone was not properly attached. Possibly as early as 1639, the altarpiece was moved from the church to the altar of Santa Cristina in the cemetery (Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 192).

The first full description dates from the third quarter of the eighteenth century, when the altarpiece had already been dismantled. According to Abate Carli (f. 86 v; transcribed by Brandi 1941, pp. 320–21, and 1947, pp. 39–40):

In the main Hospital of Siena, a big painting on panel that previously was in the cemetery on the now-unused altar of Santa Cristina has been recently restored [*rinfrascato*] (so that, in fact, one hardly recognizes it). It has been reduced to many small paintings to be put in the rector's rooms, and the big pieces [*pezzi grandi*] in the new dormitory of the wet-nurses. I believe that it was executed around the middle of the fifteenth century. The background is gilt, but only in a few places. Ten very small paintings depict the Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine, Saint Catherine giving her robe to a poor man, the Blessed Raymond writing her revelation, the saint speaking to the pope (with cardinals dressed in red), Christ giving her Communion, the saint curing a sick woman, her death, three saints giving her the habit, the Exchange of Hearts, the Stigmatization. The architecture derives from the Gothic; there is some delicacy, but with dryness. For those times they are the work of a good artist [*Professore*], but somewhat inferior to Vecchietta and Matteo di Giovanni. I did not see the Crucifixion of the Lord which I hear is at the carpenter's. There are six small, oblong panels with the following saints: Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, S. Galgano, S. Bernardino, S. Catherine, B. Andrea Gallerani, a Franciscan martyr. In some respects they seem made before the first half of the fifteenth century, in others after. The main panel that was in the center represents the Purification of Mary, with a great architectural setting of the Temple. In the center is the Priest, with a gilt vestment; to the right the Virgin (with a very beautiful head, and good drapery) and two other old men. Then there are two very long columns; to the right of one Saint Joseph with the doves; to the left the prophet Anna. I see in this painting the style of those [works] in the sacristy of S. Andrea; if not by the same author, it is by one just a little later.

Carli not only gives a precious description of the altarpiece; he also demonstrates a high degree of critical judgment, indicating a difference in style between the paintings and comparing that of the main panel to some pictures in the sacristy of Sant'Andrea—a reference to Giovanni di Paolo's disassembled triptych of the Coronation of the Virgin, dated 1445, then in the sacristy of the church and now on the high altar (Neri Lusanna 1985, p. 284). Almost all of the panels described by Carli can be located today. The main panel with the Purification of the Virgin (255 × 172 cm.) was transferred from the hospital to the Istituto di Belle Arti in the nineteenth century and is now in the Siena Pinacoteca (fig. 1). Nine of the ten scenes from the Life of Saint Catherine, the *Crucifixion*, and four of the six oblong panels of saints were bought in Siena by Johann Anton Ramboux (cata-

logue 1862, nos. 113–122, 150–153; sale, Lempertz, Cologne, May 23, 1867, nos. 113–122, 150–153), probably in 1838, the year Ramboux wrote Johann David Passavant that he had purchased numerous paintings in Siena—including twenty-six *biccherna* covers—which he was sending to Germany (Ziemke 1969, pp. 287–88, n. 8); these are in various public and private collections. The American sculptor William Wetmore Story owned the tenth scene from the Saint Catherine series, the *Saint Catherine Receiving the Stigmata* (cat. 38 e) now in the Robert Lehman Collection. Story was in Italy from 1847, and stayed in Siena several times after 1857. He may have been given or bought the panel from Walter Savage Landon, who had a large art collection, was in need, and stayed with the Storys in Siena about 1858–59 (James 1903, II, pp. 14–29; Stephen 1892/93). The two oblong panels showing Saints Bernardino and Catherine cannot be traced, nor can what Carli referred to ambiguously as the “*pezzi grandi*,” or large panels—assuming that this designation applied to something besides the *Purification of the Virgin*. Aside from the main panel in Siena and the two small, oblong panels (51.5 × 17.3 cm. each) of Saint Galgano and the Blessed Peter of Siena (?) (Aartbischoppelijk Museum, Utrecht), all of the extant panels are included here.

The reconstruction of the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece and the association of the Saint Catherine series with it remain highly conjectural, despite the testimony of Carli (who describes only the disassembled panels). Three theories have been advanced. The first views the Saint Catherine series and the *Crucifixion* as part of the original commission, identifying them as a sort of predella to the *Purification* (Brandi 1947, pp. 36–39, and 1949, pp. 98–100, 201–7; Coor 1959, pp. 82–85; E. de Fernandez-Gimenez 1967, pp. 103–11), which van Os (1971, pp. 289–302) argues was flanked by large panels (the “*pezzi grandi*”) of standing saints. The second hypothesis is that the narrative series was added as a predella to the altarpiece after Saint Catherine's canonization in 1461, eighty-one years after her death (Pope-Hennessy 1947, pp. 138–39, 196). The third rejects any association with the *Purification*, suggesting instead that the series surrounded an image of Saint Catherine (Pope-Hennessy 1937, pp. 131–32; Zeri and Gardner 1980, p. 25). With the available evidence, no definitive solution is possible, but for iconographic and stylistic reasons, only the second and third theories are likely to be correct (Pope-Hennessy 1987, pp. 128–31).

Regarding the second theory, it is worth noting that Giovanni di Paolo was commissioned to paint a new predella for Andrea Vanni's altarpiece in the church of Santo Stefano in about 1450 (van Os 1981), and that Sano di Pietro did the same thing for an altarpiece in the Palazzo Pubblico (cat. 18). An extremely interesting document discov-

ered by Bähr (1988; the author kindly communicated the information before its publication) reveals that an altarpiece in San Domenico, Siena, underwent changes after Catherine's canonization. In 1462 the guild of the *Speziali* (called *aromatariorum* in the document) took over a chapel that had an altarpiece that corresponded to the so-called Pecci altarpiece of 1426 by Giovanni di Paolo. The following were the guild's requirements for the painting: "In qua cappella et tabula debeant apponi arma dicte universitatis ad omnem petitionem dicte universitatis. Item loco unius ex Sanctis supranominatis debeat pingi figura prefate Virginis S. Caterine de Senis" ("The guild's coat of arms must be placed in the chapel and one of the saints in the altarpiece must be replaced with

an image of Catherine of Siena"). The guild likely called upon Giovanni di Paolo, the painting's original artist, to make the adjustment. It is possible that his *Saint Catherine* in the Fogg Art Museum was the replacement. Although cut down in length, its dimensions are similar to those of the surviving lateral panels of Saints John and Dominic (Siena Pinacoteca), and the figure faces left, indicating that it would have been on the right side and the other two panels on the left. Conceivably, the Pizzicaiuoli guild members were similarly moved to replace their altarpiece's more traditional predella, although when they asked and received permission to change the dedication of the chapel in 1457, it was consecrated to Saint Michael the Archangel, not to Saint Catherine.

On Purification Day 1459, Pius II honored the guild by distributing to the citizens of Siena the ritual candles (Allegretti 1733, col. 769). Possibly in commemoration of Catherine's canonization process, which was well under way, the Pizzicaiuoli decided to incorporate episodes from her life in their altarpiece. It should be noted, however, that the Pizzicaiuoli do not seem to have been excessively devoted to Saint Catherine. In their 1539 statutes the provisions for her feast are no different from those for such other celebrations as that for Saint Bernardino or for the Annunciation; there is no mention of special ceremonies at the altar in Santa Maria della Scala as there are for Purification Day (*Breve*, f. 8).

As noted by Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 131), technical evidence derived from the individual panels and from old photographs of those that have been transferred from their original supports invalidates all previous reconstructions. Five of the scenes were on panels with a horizontal grain: *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* (cat. 38 b) and *Saint Catherine and the Beggar* (cat. 38 c), which were joined together as a pair with a gold strip between them; *The Crucifixion* (cat. 38 k); and *Saint Catherine Dictating Her Dialogues to Raymond of Capua* and *Saint Catherine before a Pope* (cat. 38 h, i), also joined as a pair. The other six scenes seem to have had panels with a vertical grain. On the right lateral surface of *Saint Catherine Beseeching Christ to Resuscitate Her Mother* (cat. 38 f) there are traces of an architectural setting, suggesting that another scene was affixed at a right angle to it; its left lateral surface is gilt. The right fourth of the *Death of Saint Catherine* (cat. 38 j) has been made up; it is possible that this was done because it also had a scene contiguous to it on the right. This evidence indicates that the *Saint Catherine Beseeching Christ* may have been situated beneath the lateral face of the left pilaster of the complex to which it belonged, with the *Death of Saint Catherine* possibly beneath the front face of the right pilaster. The placement of the remaining vertical scenes is even more conjectural. The combined width of the panels with a horizontal grain is approxi-

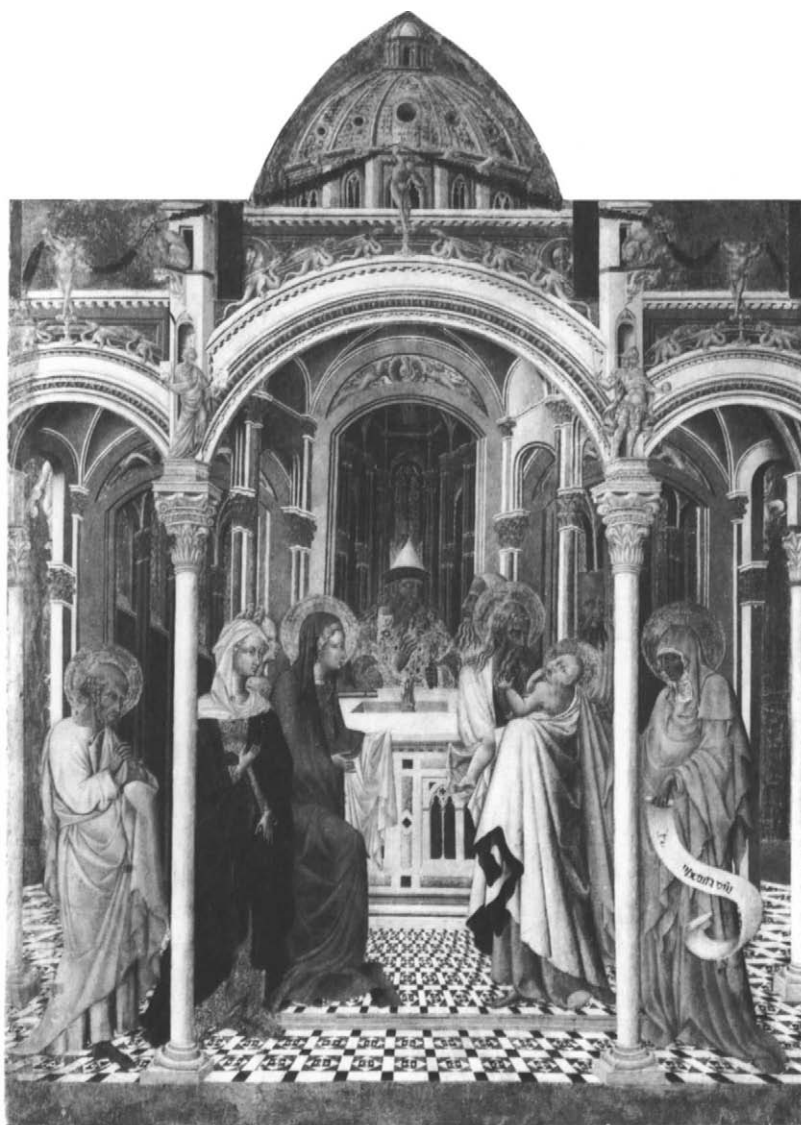


Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo. *The Purification of the Virgin*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

mately equal to that of the *Purification*, and it has been suggested by Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 131) that the remaining vertical panels were superimposed at the sides in a highly unconventional manner. Van Os (1971, p. 293), by contrast, has argued that, like Ambrogio Lorenzetti's cathedral altarpiece (fig. 2) that served as Giovanni di Paolo's compositional model, the *Purification* was flanked by two full-length figures of standing saints. Although his assertion that one of these was Saint Catherine of Siena is contradicted by Carli's testimony (Saint Catherine would have been represented on one of the six small, oblong panels, all of which showed Sienese saints), this idea that there were large, lateral panels may be correct. In that case, the total width of the altarpiece could accommodate all of the scenes of Catherine's life (including the two hypothetically missing scenes) as a predella, with the six small saints forming traditional pilasters (three of the four extant panels are of saints facing to the right with only one facing left; the Saints Bernardino and Catherine presumably belonged to the right-hand pilaster). However, the vertical panels would necessarily have to be envisaged as projecting elements applied to the front of the predella. Only in this way are the gilt lateral surfaces of the *Miraculous Communion of Saint Catherine* comprehensible (Zeri and Gardner 1980, pp. 25–26). In this regard it might be noted that the only two vertical scenes that have not been either transferred or cradled (cat. 38 a, g) have the remains of nails on their reverse sides.

Although in principle the Saint Catherine series could have formed a predella to the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece of the *Purification of the Virgin*, in practice it is impossible to suggest an arrangement of the scenes that does not compromise the exigencies of either chronology or technical evidence. For example, assuming from the technical evidence that the lateral face of the left pilaster contained the *Catherine Beseeching Christ to Resuscitate Her Mother*, a scene that chronologically should appear between the *Catherine Receiving the Stigmata* and the *Miraculous Communion*, then the other scenes, if they were arranged chronologically, would present an irregular rhythm of vertical and horizontal panels. The first panel on the far left would be the missing vertical pilaster base, followed by the vertical *Catherine Invested with the Dominican Habit* as the first panel in the predella proper, the *Mystic Marriage* (horizontal), *Catherine and the Beggar* (horizontal), *Catherine Exchanging Her Heart with Christ* (vertical), the *Crucifixion* (horizontal), *Catherine Receiving the Stigmata* (vertical), the *Miraculous Communion* (vertical), *Catherine Dictating Her Dialogues* (horizontal), *Catherine before a Pope* (horizontal), the *Death of Catherine* (vertical), and finally, on the lateral face of the right pilaster, a lost panel with a vertical grain. Rhythmically, the arrangement would only

work if another scene were taken out of chronological order: for example, if the *Miraculous Communion* were put between the *Catherine before a Pope* and the *Death of Catherine*, a logical grouping of vertical and horizontal scenes emerges, which is not outside the range of possibility. The scene of Catherine before a pope may refer to any number of audiences, and her dictation of visions occurred on numerous occasions throughout her life. The biographical chronology would not in any real sense be violated by this order.

However, the likelihood that the *Presentation* and the Saint Catherine series were never meant to be together cannot be excluded. When the church's altarpieces were shifted around in the early seventeenth century and the



Figure 2. Ambrogio Lorenzetti. *The Presentation in the Temple*. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece was removed to the cemetery, another altarpiece dedicated to Saint Catherine may have been disassembled and the scenes fitted around the *Presentation*. The pilasters could have come from yet a third altarpiece (it seems unlikely that Saint Catherine would have been relegated to a pilaster in an altarpiece containing a narrative cycle of her life unless these elements had to be adjusted to the Pizzicaiuoli *Purification*).

The chronology of Giovanni di Paolo's narrative paintings is inherently difficult because few are dated. The only late narrative paintings with a putative date are the two panels with miracles of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (Gemäldegalerie der Akademie, Vienna, and the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum); these can be associated with the standing figure of Saint Nicholas, dated 1456, in the church of Sant'Agostino in Montepulciano. Yet they do not lend themselves to ready comparison with the Catherine scenes: One is a street scene and the other a seascape. Several observations can, nevertheless, be made about the present paintings and Giovanni di Paolo's late style.

First, the pilaster sections with standing saints compare favorably with the figures of relatively the same dimensions in the *Lamentation* in the lunette of the 1463 Pienza altarpiece. The looser modeling and the larger proportions of the figures, which tend to have out-of-scale limbs and hands, are common to both works, and mark a progressive development in the artist's late style. This is an important point because on a small scale Giovanni's figure style changes little from the late 1440s. Secondly, the *Crucifixion* from the Catherine series is almost an exact copy of the related scene in the predella from the Venerabile Compagnia degli Artisti in Montepulciano (cat. 36), with the difference that the former has a panoramic landscape background. This is also true of a *Crucifixion* at Christ Church, Oxford. The Venerabile Compagnia predella seems to postdate the 1456 altarpiece in Sant'Agostino in Montepulciano. The inclusion of a panoramic landscape implies a later date. Thirdly, the architectural settings of the Catherine scenes are purposefully distorted, and although orthogonals are insistently drawn to recede into the distance, they do not relate to each other in a rational fashion or form believable spaces. The artist seems to have wished to heighten the mystical quality of the scenes by animating the architectural space in this manner—in sharp contrast to the *Purification*, in which the architecture is rendered more or less rationally, and the relationship of the figures to the setting is logical. Fourthly, Pope-Hennessy (1987, p. 130) has made an important observation about the color: The rich tonalities of the (now badly damaged) *Purification* relate to Giovanni's handling in the 1440s; the more pallid hues of the Catherine scenes are those of the Pienza altarpiece.

Finally, there is the matter of the iconography, which provides further reasons for dating the Catherine scenes after her canonization in 1461. First, she is shown with the halo of a saint rather than the rays of a blessed, as she had always been depicted before in Sienese painting. In Vecchietta's *Arliquiera* (reliquary cabinet), executed just a few years before the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece, and for the same church, Catherine appears as a blessed, and in the border frescoes painted by Vecchietta in a niche in the Baptistry, in the 1450s, a few years after the altarpiece, there is a small image of Catherine with the rays of a blessed, clumsily altered into a saint's halo after her canonization. Although a venerated person might sometimes be honored with a saint's halo before canonization, fifteenth-century occurrences of this are rare. In this context, it should be noted that a close examination of the halos in Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio's precanonization images of Saint Bernardino reveals that they were added over the rays of a blessed (Bellosi, in Cortona 1970, p. 22).

The care that Catherine's early followers took in properly promulgating her image with only the rays of a blessed is borne out by the comments of Tommaso d'Antonio Caffarini (about 1350–1434), one of her first biographers and the most active proponent of her canonization. Complaining of the liberties that had been taken in depicting noncanonized personages with halos, he categorically stated that in Catherine's case this had not happened: "Moreover I say how I have always noted that the figure or image of said Virgin was painted with the rays or radiant diadem around the head as they are wont to paint blessed persons not yet canonized, even though I have seen many others not yet canonized depicted with round halos, just as if they had been canonized" (Laurent 1942, p. 28). This was in response to criticism leveled at his colleague Bartolomeo da Ferrara for preaching a sermon in honor of Catherine on the feast day of Corpus Christi in 1411 in Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice. Apparently the sermon was considered a shocking transgression because Catherine was not part of the canonical calendar. Caffarini wanted to set the record straight, making sure that no premature enthusiasm would impede his eventual goal. His concern shows how sensitive an issue the canonization process was, among his contemporaries. In Siena, the commune took an official interest in lobbying for Catherine's elevation, but from the surviving minutes of the deliberations of the various government bodies and commissions, it is clear that the officials were most anxious to do everything correctly (see documents in Laurent 1942, pp. 468–69, 472–78, 481–95, 502–13, 533–39). Under these circumstances, in which canonization was a legal as well as a religious matter, it is most unlikely that precocious representations of Catherine as an aureoled saint would oc-

cur in such an extensive narrative cycle before official papal recognition.

Unfortunately, Catherine's halo alone cannot be conclusive proof for dating the series because Giovanni di Paolo was inconsistent in depicting the other blessed figures on the pilasters of the same altarpiece: The Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, Andrea Gallerani, and Peter of Siena (?) have halos, whereas on Vecchietta's reliquary cupboard they were only shown with rays. The rigor of the Dominicans with regard to Saint Catherine would suggest that her case was viewed differently. It is interesting, however, that in Vecchietta's fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico, which is essentially a celebration of Catherine's entry into Sienese hagiography, all the more minor blessed figures are also haloed, and that in his earlier Baptistry frescoes the blessed were given halos at a later date, as happened to the figure of Saint Catherine, as though she carried them along on the tails of her habit.

Giovanni di Paolo's Saint Catherine cycle concentrates on the mystic and visionary aspects of her personality, and especially on her relationship with Christ. Although at least two scenes seem to be missing from the series, in what survives little emphasis is put upon such common hagiographical themes as miracles of curing, and no posthumous miracles, the most usual requirement for sainthood, are represented. This contrasts sharply with pictorial cycles such as that by Simone Martini devoted to the Blessed Agostino Novello, the more contemporary representations by Sano di Pietro (cat. 20, 24) of Bernardino's miracles, or Giovanni di Paolo's Saint Nicholas of Tolentino panels. Giovanni di Paolo was called upon to create a different type of hagiography for Saint Catherine. It is not known who selected the episodes but, clearly, the program was carefully planned with a view to establishing Catherine's historical and theological significance, and in this it goes far beyond the requirements of popular devotion.

From the start of his career, Giovanni di Paolo maintained close ties with the Dominicans and, in fact, one of his first known commissions was a depiction of Saint Catherine. At San Domenico in the 1420s, he would have been able to meet some of Catherine's last surviving acquaintances, and he was undoubtedly privy to the order's efforts to promote her cult. When the time came to paint this cycle, he could have availed himself of her writings and biographies—copies of which were preserved in the convent. A member of the order must have counseled him on the selection of episodes to represent. One possible adviser may have been a certain Fra Antonio da Bologna who, on November 30, 1459, was sought by the Sienese commune through the Dominican authorities in Rome to come and preach Lenten sermons about Catherine in the cathedral: "ad honorem B. Katherine Senensis, de cuius vita illustranda et probanda sanc-

titate agitur, eiusdem magistri opera maxime egemus" (Laurent 1942, p. 485). Another possible candidate might be Andrea Benzi (1410–1472), the son of the celebrated Sienese physician Ugo Benzi, who was associated with the hospital. Benzi was a jurist and a member of Pius II's Curia in charge of Catherine's canonization proceedings (Craveri 1966). There also would have been many advisers at the Dominican order's general chapter meeting held in Siena in 1462. At this meeting Pope Pius II had Martial Auribelli deposed, and the reformer Corrado d'Asti elected head of the order (Cretyens 1975). Immediately afterward, Pius spent some time at the convent of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, where his hymn composed in Saint Catherine's honor was sung for the first time. He wrote that it brought tears to the monks' eyes (Piccolomini 1984, p. 1951).

The subjects of the scenes come from the saint's biography, the *Legenda maior*, written between 1385 and 1395 by Raymond of Capua. Raymond met Catherine in 1374, the year she was interrogated by the provincial chapter of the Dominicans in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, because of publicly expressed doubts about the extravagant nature of her visions. Afterward, Raymond was appointed her personal spiritual counselor. Catherine's visions, as told to Raymond in confession, constitute the principal material of his biography of the saint, and her dictation to him is also the subject of one of the panels (cat. 38 h). Raymond's work, composed in Latin, was circulated widely and translated, with several versions becoming available. Particularly well distributed was Tommaso Caffarini's condensed popularization known as the *Legenda minor*, and his *Supplementum*, but, as with all other versions, these were indebted to Raymond. Pope Pius II's bull of canonization, his sermon, and the laudatory hymn (the bull and sermon are published in Laurent 1942, pp. 513–30; the hymn in Capecelatro 1863, pp. 484–86) also review Catherine's life. Many of the incidents depicted by Giovanni di Paolo are mentioned in Pius's texts and, indeed, may have provided the most direct inspiration for the selection of the episodes out of the innumerable possibilities suggested in Raymond's original biography. Pius's texts emphasize her theological learning and orthodoxy, her devotion to the Eucharist, and her association with the papacy. The scenes may have been readied for Pius II's visit to the hospital in Siena on March 24, 1464 (van Os 1974, p. 80).

From the minutes of the canonization proceedings and particularly from Caffarini's deposition, which contains a remarkable review of the growth of the cult, it can be surmised that by the early fifteenth century images of Catherine were widespread. The importance of these for the promotion of a cult was not lost on her followers, who had before them the analogous and nearly contem-

poraneous case of Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373; canonized by Boniface IX in 1391). In a letter sent to her native country, Bridget's daughter Katharina Ulfssdotter commented on the fact that the Italians were astonished that pictures of the saint did not exist in Sweden, whereas Italian churches abounded in them (Nordenfalk 1961, p. 385). In the early fifteenth century, Catherine's followers cited Bridget's canonization as a particularly relevant example since the two women's lives and their spirituality were parallel, and Bridget was then the last person to have been canonized by the Church, her canonization providing a procedural guide. An altarpiece by Martino di Bartolomeo, dated 1405, with a predella of scenes emphasizing the visionary quality of the saint's life, was in the Pisan convent of San Domenico, and seems to have been commissioned by a follower of Catherine's from the Gambacorti family (Boskovits 1987, pp. 104–6).

Among the earliest depictions of Catherine were those commissioned by the notary Cristoforo di Gano Guidini (d. 1410, Siena), who had translated the saint's *Dialogue of Divine Providence* into Italian. In his autobiography (Milanesi 1843, IV, pp. 29–40), he wrote of having ordered images of Catherine for the cathedral of Siena and the gate of his vineyard—possibly from his friend the painter Andrea Vanni, whose fresco in San Domenico is the only extant example in Siena of these early devotional images of Catherine. The Florentine reformer Giovanni Dominici (1355/6–1419) himself wrote about the didactic value of pictures; he swore that he was cured of stuttering while praying in front of Catherine's image in a church in Siena (Bertucci 1964, col. 749). Caffarini commissioned pictures of the saint and distributed relics of her body and her personal effects throughout Italy (Laurent 1942, pp. 58–64; Freuler 1987, pp. 571–73). He asserted in his testimony at the canonization trial in Venice that whatever paintings of Catherine he had seen conformed to her historical biography (Laurent 1942, p. 28). This would imply that not only single figures but narrative scenes existed. To what extent Giovanni di Paolo utilized visual rather than literary sources is hard to determine because of the scant remaining pictorial evidence.

Several books used or written at the original Venetian canonization trial in the 1410s, and reexamined in 1459 by the commission of cardinals responsible for the renewal of the process, are illustrated with simple line drawings (now in the Biblioteca Comunale, Siena: mss. T.I.1, T.I.2, T.II.1, T.II.6; see Siena 1947). They seem to have been transferred to Siena about 1460 at the request of the commune (Laurent 1942, pp. 486–88). Although the illustrations—which were drawn by a Venetian artist at the time of the first process (for an attribution to Cristoforo Cortese, see Freuler 1987, p. 575)—do not provide a stylistic or compositional prototype for Giovanni di Paolo's paintings, they do represent some of the same

subjects, such as the Stigmatization, the Dictation of the Visions, and the Miraculous Communion. They are, therefore, a good indication of what themes concerned Catherine's followers. The subjects of other pictures in Siena, like the one by Andrea di Bartolo on her altar in San Domenico, or that in the cathedral, are not known. For the altar in the Church of Corpus Christi in Venice Andrea di Bartolo painted her image with other Dominican blessed nuns, as well as a predella that contained a scene of her stigmatization (on this, see Freuler 1987). Giovanni di Paolo's paintings, however, seem to have been the first complete cycle of her life.

CS

38 a. Saint Catherine Invested with the Dominican Habit

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.9 × 23 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned and backed with another panel. There are losses along the edges and in the gilding.

This is a vision that Saint Catherine's biographer, Raymond of Capua, actually says occurred while she was asleep. She had long desired to take the habit of the Dominicans, but the founders of other orders appeared to her asking that she choose their rule. Of the many "fathers and founders" mentioned in her biography, Giovanni di Paolo depicts only three: Dominic, holding the lily by which Catherine recognized him; Augustine, who wears a bishop's robes over his black monastic tunic; and Francis, who holds the knotted cord of the Franciscans. "She cast her eyes upon S. Dominic, and turned herself wholly to him, who, likewise, came towards her, bringing in his hand the habit of the sisters commonly called the sisters of penance of S. Dominic, and said to her: 'Daughter,' said he, 'be of good comfort, and dread no peril; for it is certain thou shalt receive this apparel and wear it'" (Kaftal 1949, p. 36; AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 875).

This is, chronologically, the first surviving scene in the series, but it may have been preceded by another episode, such as the saint's birth.

CS





38 b



38 c

38 b. The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine

Private collection, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.6 × 28.6 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed with another panel. There is a strip of gold along the right border where the panel was joined to catalogue 38 c.

According to Raymond's text, Catherine had various visions that Christ would make her his bride. After a period of fasting and prayer, he came to her cell and promised that the marriage would be accomplished. As he spoke these words, there appeared the Virgin and Saints John the Evangelist, Paul, and Dominic, as well as David, "with a musical psalter in his hand, on which he played a heavenly song of inestimable sweetness in the ears of the new spouse. Then our Blessed Lady came to her, and took her by the hand, and, withal, stretched out her fingers towards her Son, with a very comely grace, and besought Him that He would vouchsafe to espouse her to Him in faith" (Kaftal 1949, pp. 46–47; AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 890). Christ then put a ring on her finger and married himself to her, after which the vision vanished. Giovanni di Paolo's depiction includes Saint Peter, who is not mentioned by Raymond. In an earlier version of the scene, painted about 1385 by an unknown Pisan painter (the Master of Saint Ursula ?), and now in the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa, Peter is also present. Otherwise, Giovanni di Paolo closely follows the text (even more so than the Pisan artist, who omitted David and did not show the Virgin holding Catherine's hand). The vision closely relates to the story of the Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, which became a popular subject in Tuscan painting during Catherine of Siena's lifetime.

CS

38 c. Saint Catherine and the Beggar

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.8 × 28.9 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed with another panel. There is a strip of gold along the left border where it was joined to catalogue 38 b. There are losses along the bottom of the panel, in the two horizontal cracks above the saint's head, and in the lower part of her robe.

The scene relates to an episode in Raymond's biography of Catherine in which Christ appeared to the saint as a beggar in need of clothes. He asked for a coat, then a shirt, and finally sleeves, all of which she provided from her wardrobe or from those of other household members.

Then the beggar asked for clothes for a companion in the hospital. She was unable to procure any more from her home and, because she could not give him her last garment for modesty's sake, she had to send him away. This greatly troubled her, but the next night Christ appeared holding the cloak she had given the beggar, which was now bejeweled. He then took a blood-colored garment from the wound in his side and clothed her with it.

This is the only instance in which the artist departs significantly from Raymond's account. Since it would have been impossible to depict the complicated narrative in a single panel, Giovanni di Paolo shows Christ on the left appearing to Catherine with a coat, while on the right she is seen giving that same garment to a beggar. The two episodes take place in the identical architectural setting, but are separated by the two arched openings in the background.

CS

38 d. Saint Catherine Exchanging Her Heart with Christ

Private collection, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.6 × 22.9 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed with another panel. The surrounding, fictive frame is false; the picture surface has been cropped on all sides.

One day Catherine petitioned Christ to give her a new, pure heart. Accordingly, he came, opened her side, and took away her old one. A few days later, Christ reappeared with his heart in his hand, and placed it in her side. The present scene relates to a third episode, in which Catherine was elevated in rapture, envisioning that her heart leapt out of her body, entered Christ's side, and was made one with his heart. However, except for her suspension in the air, the details of the present panel do not correspond to the biographical account: Catherine simply holds out a bloodied heart with her right hand and presses her other hand against her breast, as Christ blesses her. The painting seems not to depict any one event, but to generally illustrate Catherine's controversial mystical ideas about the blood of Christ.

The emphasis throughout the saint's life on her devotion to the blood of Christ parallels Dominican concerns in the mid-fifteenth century. During the pontificate of Pius II, the order was in an acrimonious fight with the Franciscan order over whether the blood that Christ shed during the Crucifixion was to be considered divine or not. The Franciscans (although by no means the whole order) put forward the view that the blood was



not sacred. In 1464, while in Mantua, Pius II presided over a long series of debates on this theme in an effort to settle the question, and this subject comprises a principal part of his autobiography, *I Commentarii* (Piccolomini 1984, pp. 2049–2131). The arguments were so complex and all parties involved so far from agreement that, in the end, the exasperated pope issued a bull on August 1, 1464, declaring that all discussion of the topic must cease, although the Dominican viewpoint gained favor. The bleeding heart in this panel suggests that the series was painted during the period in which the controversy raged, especially as it does not strictly follow the account in Raymond's biography of Saint Catherine. Later paintings illustrating Catherine's exchange of hearts with Christ, such as the one by Cozzarelli in the Siena Pinacoteca, do not show a bleeding heart. In his poem entitled "Sanctissimus," Pope Pius did refer to this incident ("Illa cor a Domino petit renouari alma, / Continue meditant: compos feliciter atti / Facta fuit voti, viditque evellere Christum / Cor prius, atque novum flammis sibi tradere flagrans": Capecelatro 1863, p. 484).

It has also been argued that the iconography of Vecchietta's bronze tabernacle for the high altar of Santa Maria della Scala (on the high altar of the cathedral since 1506), commissioned in 1467 by the rector Niccolò Ricoveri (in office 1456–76), was influenced by the Dominican view in this controversy (Pfeiffer 1975, especially pp. 42–45). On the summit of the tabernacle is a standing figure of Christ holding the cross, his bleeding wounds particularly evident. The same rector would have been in office when Giovanni di Paolo's Saint Catherine scenes were executed. The mystic theme of this scene as well as of many of the others is in line with the theologically complex iconographic policy of hospital commissions, such as the tabernacle of Vecchietta's earlier frescoes of the Creed in the ex-reliquary chapel. The emphasis on Catherine's devotion to the Eucharist and the blood of Christ was very topical and related to such contemporary events as Pius's celebrated pageant of Corpus Domini in Viterbo in 1462 (Piccolomini 1984, pp. 1594–1613) and the erection of the Eucharistic tabernacle by Benedetto da Maiano on the high altar of San Domenico in the mid-1470s. Giovanni di Paolo was very aware of such occurrences. In one of his first altarpieces he depicted the bleeding Christ holding the cross in front of the souls in Purgatory and Christ triumphant over the damned in hell; now in the Siena Pinacoteca, it was probably once in the Chapel of the Crucifix in San Domenico, whose patrons were the Bellanti.

CS

38 e. Saint Catherine Receiving the Stigmata

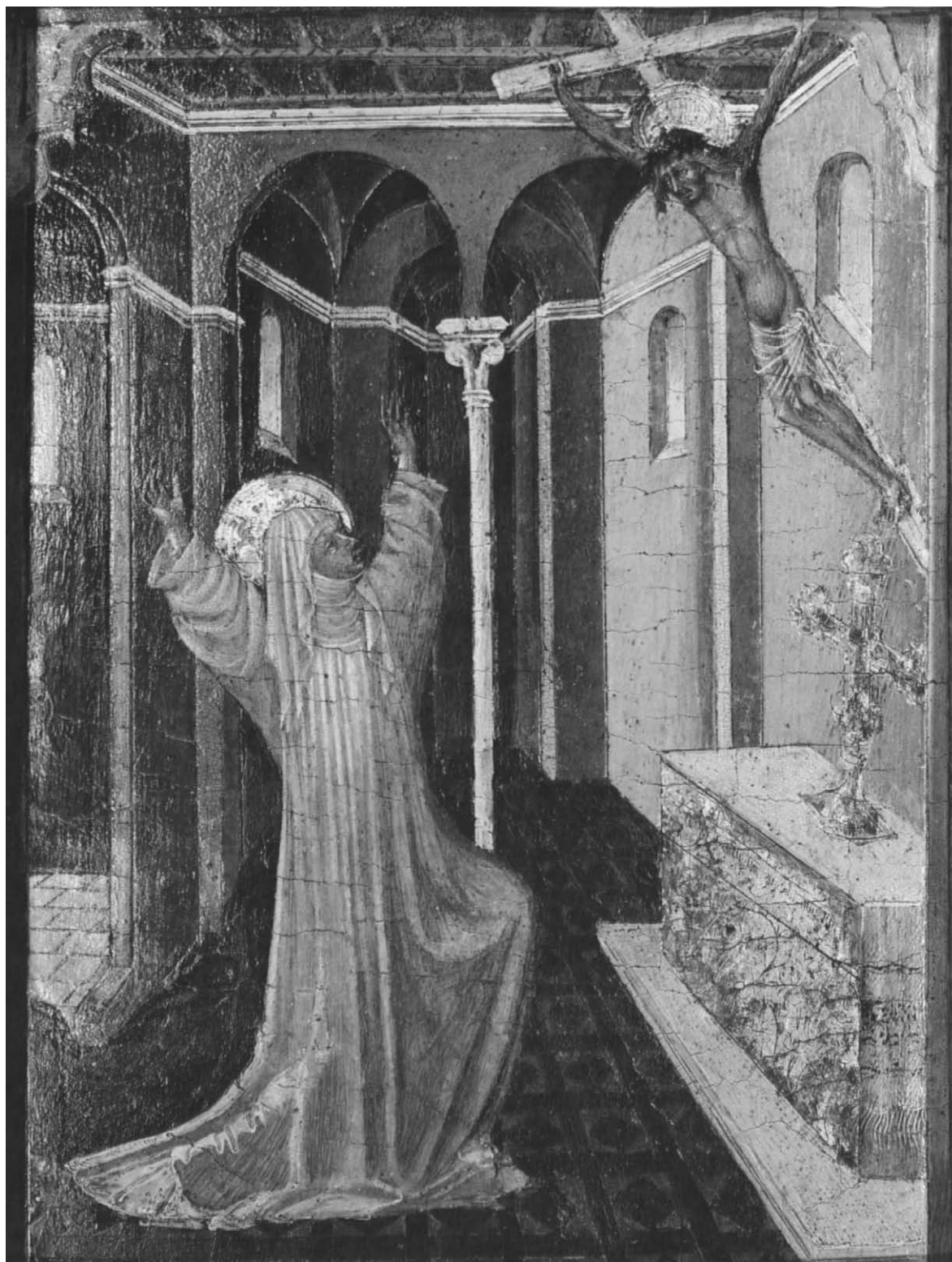
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 27.8 × 20 cm. The panel, which has been thinned to 1.4 cm., has a vertical grain. It is cut on all four sides, and the surface is badly abraded. The pink floor tiles, the upper right corner (including part of the cross and Christ's left arm), Catherine's habit below her left knee, and the black mantle are basically new. Four nails are visible on the reverse.

The stigmatization of Catherine took place during a visit to Pisa. She had just attended Mass said by her confessor Raymond of Capua and received Communion. According to Raymond, in his presence and that of "divers others," she fell in a trance:

Suddenly, as they beheld her, the body that lay prostrate on the ground was raised up, and she kneeled upon her knees, stretching up her arms and hands, and showing in her face a marvelous goodly and clear brightness. When she had kneeled after this manner for a good while, at the length she fell down suddenly, like one that had received a deadly wound, and soon after that she was restored again to her bodily senses. Then she called for her ghostly father, and said secretly unto him these words: "Father, I give you to understand for certain that I bear now in my body, by the grace and mercy of God, the blessed marks of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. . . . Father, I saw our Lord fastened upon the cross coming down towards me and environing me round about with a marvelous beautiful light. With which gracious sight my soul was so ravished and had such a passing desire to go and meet with our Lord, that my body was constrained by the very force of the spirit to set itself up, as you might see. Then there came down from the holes of His blessed wounds five bloody beams, which were directed towards the same parts of my body, to wit, to my hands, feet, and heart. With that I cried out to our Lord and said: 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, let no signs of these holy marks appear outwardly to the sight of men.' Suddenly, while I was speaking these words, before those beams were fully come down to my body, they changed their colour out of a sanguine red to a marvelous brightness, and so in the form of a goodly pure light they lighted and rested upon the said parts of my body" (Kaftal 1949, pp. 78–79; AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 910).

The picture differs from this account in that there are no witnesses; Catherine is alone in the chapel. Secondly, there are no streams of blood or beams of light connecting Christ's wounds to Catherine's. This accords with





the invisibility of the stigmata but not with the shafts of light that she supposedly saw. Scarcely visible, because the mordant gilding is much worn, are the rays of golden light that emanate from Christ's feet, illuminating the gold crucifix on the altar below. This is the only visual indication of the miraculous shafts of light. The wounds in Catherine's hands are actually indicated by bits of red pigment and traces of gold.

Catherine's stigmatization was a controversial event; there were doubts as to its authenticity, particularly on the part of the Franciscan order. The Dominicans made light of the Franciscan protests. There is a story of how a doubtful Franciscan friar saw a picture of Catherine with the stigmata out of which blood flowed. However, in 1475 the Franciscan pope Sixtus IV prohibited the depiction ("habere, pingere, e facere") of Catherine with the stigmata, and at the Dominican general meeting in Perugia in 1477 the order was forced to accept this injunction (Cartotti Oddasso 1963, col. 1037). Even Pius II was cautious about the episode. He does not mention it in either his canonization bull or his laudatory sermon, but refers to it obliquely in a hymn composed in 1462 and first sung at the abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore on October 2 as "vulnerum formam miserata Christi exprimis ipsa" (Capecelatro 1863, p. 485). In the "Sanctissimus," seemingly composed before the canonization, he is more specific: "Illa crucem memori portans sub pectore semper, / Stigmata passa fuit, dictu mirabile, Christi" (Capecelatro 1863, p. 484).

Caffarini wrote a treatise about the stigmatization for the *Supplementum* in which he was careful to document the stigmatizations of blessed figures other than Saint Francis. In an illustration in his personal copy of the treatise (Biblioteca Comunale, Siena: codex T.I.2, f. 81; Fawtier 1921, p. 52), Saint Catherine's stigmatization takes place in an enclosed chamber, as portrayed by Giovanni di Paolo, but there are witnesses, as in Raymond's biography. This obviously served as proof for Caffarini that the episode did occur. The only other surviving early representation of the event is the altarpiece commissioned by Caffarini for the Church of Corpus Christi in Venice (Freuler 1987, pp. 573–77) that shows Catherine alone. There also seems to have been a version of the altarpiece in Pisa (Freuler 1987, p. 573), and undoubtedly other paintings of Saint Catherine's stigmatization existed that may have influenced Giovanni di Paolo.

CS

38 f. Saint Catherine Beseeching Christ to Resuscitate Her Mother

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.3 × 22 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has its original thickness of 4.1 cm. Strips of wood 1.5 and .3 cm., respectively, have been added to the base and at the left and have been painted to enlarge the picture surface. A loss to the left of Catherine's head has been filled and, consequently, the base of the niche with the *Crucifixion* has been incorrectly repainted as a semicircle. The paint surface and the gold are generally worn, and the halos of Catherine and of the cherubim are new. The right vertical edge (see right) has traces of a scene that undoubtedly continued on a panel affixed at a right angle to this one, demonstrating that together they formed the base of a lateral pilaster. The fragment shows an architectural setting in which a door with a tiled overhang opens onto a room with a box-like table or altar.

As Catherine's mother, Lapa, neared death, she did not reconcile herself with God, and died without repenting for her sins. Catherine was shocked at this way of dying, and prayed that her mother be returned to life to remedy the situation. Several women and neighbors who came to prepare the corpse heard Catherine praying. At the end of the prayer, her mother came back to life and was conceded enough time to restore herself in the eyes of God. The moment when she returns to life and sits up in bed is represented here. The scene is the only one in which the saint's troubled family life is suggested.

The position and shape of the bed recurs in *The Birth of Saint John* from a predella datable to 1454 in the National Gallery, London, and again in the later series of the Life of Saint John (see cat. 37). Like the other vertical interior views in the Saint Catherine series, a painted border with corbels in the upper corners is used to enframe the scene.

Technical evidence indicates that this panel occupied a position on a pilaster base—possibly the lateral face of the left-hand pilaster—with another scene on the front face at right angles to it. This would mean that the episode was chronologically out of order. In the saint's biographies, the event falls between *Saint Catherine Exchanging Her Heart with Christ* (cat. 38 d) and *The Miraculous Communion* (cat. 38 g). This would indicate that if all the other scenes were part of a predella, the two scenes on the lateral faces of the pilasters had a different, didactic intent. The scene from the right pilaster is lost, but it may have shown another miracle, such as Catherine's visit to the dying rector of the Misericordia during the plague, after which he was cured. These would have contrasted with the specifically personal and visionary quality of the rest of the cycle.

CS

Giovanni di Paolo



38 f: right vertical edge



38 g. The Miraculous Communion of Saint Catherine

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 28.9 × 22.2 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1.6 cm. and cradled. Both vertical edges are gilt. Much of the paint surface is uneven and worn. There are losses in the altar at the left, in the angels to the lower left of Christ, and in the priest's robes.

One day when it seemed that Catherine would not be able to receive the sacrament because she was ill, her confessor went to church and said Mass alone. During the breaking of the Host, he noticed a part missing and after Mass he diligently tried to find it. However, in the interim Catherine had actually entered the church and at another altar received a piece of the Host from Christ himself.

This panel underscores Catherine's devotion to the Eucharist. Pope Pius II, in his canonization bull, even spoke of how she frequently subsisted on the Host alone. The Dominican order was especially involved in the promotion of the feast of Corpus Domini and the devotion to the Eucharist, and in the 1470s they had a Eucharistic tabernacle placed on the high altar of San Domenico in Siena. The devotion was also a concern of the hospital church, which commissioned a bronze tabernacle from Vecchietta for the high altar in 1472.

The present picture is divided into two sections and, like the scenes with the beggar and the dictation of Catherine's dialogues (cat. 38 c, h), the artist uses arched openings to separate the action. On the left Catherine receives the Host from Christ, while on the right Raymond elevates the Eucharist in front of an altarpiece with the Madonna and Child and saints. The architecture has no logical organization and does not resemble an ecclesiastical structure.

CS

38 h. Saint Catherine Dictating Her Dialogues to Raymond of Capua

The Detroit Institute of Arts

Tempera and gold on wood. 30.4 × 30.4 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed. A gold strip on the right separated the panel from catalogue 38 g. Incised lines define the limits of the composition on all four sides. The picture surface is well preserved.

Raymond of Capua relates how Catherine of Siena was often overcome by rapture and inspired by God on points of holy doctrine, "which she, being ravished and abstracted, uttered in the presence of many godly and great learned men, which wrote as she spake, and compiled a

book containing six treatises" (Kaftal 1949, p. 120; AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 945). The book was *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*, and Raymond of Capua is usually credited with having transcribed it into Latin. In the painting the many learned men are reduced to one. Earlier depictions of the scene in manuscripts show the saint dictating her dialogues to at least two, and sometimes three, secretaries. Examples are Cristoforo di Gano Guidini's Italian version of the *Dialogue* (Biblioteca Comunale, Siena: ms. T.II.4, f. 5 v), another copy of the same text in the Vatican (codex Barber 4063, f. 1 r), and a collection of the saint's letters (Archivio della Cattedrale, Modena: codex of the Confraternità della Santissima Annunziata, f. 1 r; ill. in Pagliaresi 1970, frontispiece).

Protests by Jean de Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, at the Council of Constance about uncontrolled visions on the part of women and, in particular, by Bridget of Sweden (the validity of her canonization was questioned, and Martin V had later to reconfirm it) were chilling instances of what the Dominicans wanted to circumvent (Nordenfalk 1961, pp. 388–89). For example, even in the Siena manuscript of Bridget's visions, commissioned in 1399 by the same Cristoforo di Gano Guidini who was Catherine's former secretary and translator, as well as notary of the hospital, the Swedish saint is shown alone at her desk writing down her visions (Chelazzi Dini 1982, p. 316, ill. p. 315). Obviously in order to combat criticism of the sort directed against Bridget, Catherine's followers were very cautious about asserting that Catherine's visions were controlled by Church-appointed scholars—which is why Raymond became associated with her. After her canonization there was less need to argue for Catherine's orthodoxy. Pius, in the canonization bull, cites her learning, although even he is careful to say that she was questioned on many subjects by the bishops of the Church (Laurent 1942, p. 528), and in the verses in her honor he praises her "Sacris studiis" (Capecelatro 1863, p. 486). With many of the problematic issues resolved, Giovanni di Paolo was able to bring an intimacy to her rapturous dictation. She is shown enclosed in a chamber with her confessor, intent upon his writing. A vision of Christ appears to her alone.

CS

38 i. Saint Catherine before a Pope

Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation, Lugano

Tempera and gold on wood. 30.4 × 30.4 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned and backed. There is a gold strip at the left where the panel was joined to catalogue 38 h.

The scene is sometimes identified as Catherine before Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370–78), whom she is credited with

Giovanni di Paolo



38 h



having influenced to return the papacy to Rome. However, from Raymond of Capua's description of her papal appearances, the picture could just as well represent Catherine preaching before Urban VI (r. 1378–89). Raymond specifically mentions that on that occasion cardinals were present:

... She made sundry and divers sermons in the presence of Pope Gregory the Eleventh, with such a wonderful grace, eloquence, and authority that the Pope himself and all that were about him were astonished to hear her. And afterwards, being required by Pope Urbanus, his successor, to do the like in open consistory, she made such a wonderful and dreadful oration concerning the wonderful providence of God over his Church, and over the head pastor of the same, whom she declared to be the said Pope Urbanus the Sixth, affirming constantly before them all that she understood so much by a most certain revelation from God, and she rebuked both the Pope and all his cardinals with such a constant boldness for their base minds and lack of manly courage in God's course, that they were all forced to confess that it was not she that spake, but the spirit and wisdom of God in her. (Kaftal 1949, p. 122; AA.SS. Aprilis, iii, p. 945.)

Catherine's sermon to Urban VI came in the wake of the schism in the Church. The French cardinals and their allies had voted for another pope, Clement VII (r. 1378–94), who continued the Avignon papacy that she fought against. Pius II, perhaps less anxious to touch upon the papal schism, simply calls Catherine "acceptissima" to Clement, in his sermon to her, and mentions that she served him in many missions. He speaks at length of her visit to Gregory in Avignon and the discussions that they had with each other in which she finally asked him: "Quid me, inquit, pontifex, vilem femellam interrogas" (Laurent 1942, p. 519).

CS

38 j. The Death of Saint Catherine

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 24.8 × 26.1 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned and transferred to another, cradled panel. The right 7.5 cm. of the paint surface is new. It was possibly restored when a now-lost adjoining panel, affixed at a right angle to it, was removed. Conjecturally, the two panels could have formed the base of a right-hand lateral pilaster. The *Death of Saint Catherine* would have been on the front face. It is slightly wider than the other vertically grained panels, but there is no evidence that this was originally the case. In the catalogue to the sale of the collection of Johann Anton Ramboux, the dimensions given are 21.5 × 17 cm. The ceiling, the architecture, and the floor at the left are repainted, and the gold is new.

Catherine died in Rome on April 29, 1380. Her death at thirty-three, like that of Saint Francis, raised an inevitable comparison with Christ. This comparison informed her entire life, the image her followers wished to perpetuate, and, in fact, the iconography of this painted cycle. Her dying words were those of Christ on the cross. Before her death she asked for Christ's mercy and spoke of his precious blood, and then called out, "Blood, blood."

She had long prepared herself for death, and had received indulgences from Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370–78), which were granted again in the last days of Urban VI's reign (1378–89). However, at the moment of her demise, the sources relate that she had only her close family of followers with her, which is how the event is depicted in the panel.



38 j: prior to a recent restoration



38 j



It is not known if the restored part follows the original composition. The restorer did not paint over a damaged area of the panel but worked on a new preparation. The monk with upraised arms in the reconstructed portion seems to derive from Giotto's *Death of Saint Francis* in the Bardi Chapel of Santa Croce, Florence. The absence of a crucifix is somewhat puzzling, since Catherine's biographers emphasize that one of the saint's last acts was to pray before a cross. They also mention that Communion was ministered to her. The monk holding the Eucharistic chalice and the paten, one of the original figures, may indicate that these references to her dying moments were perhaps included in the reconstructed section.

The exhibition of the picture at the Metropolitan Museum in 1988–89 is the first since it was sold by The Minneapolis Institute of Art in 1958. The unavailability of the painting and the existence of several photographs that showed it before and after a modern restoration (see ill. p. 238) caused Maginnis (1975, p. 609) erroneously to propose that it was a copy of the lost original.

38 k. The Crucifixion

Rijksmuseum Het Catharijneconvent, Utrecht
(on deposit at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

Tempera and gold on wood. 29.8 × 62.7 cm.; painted surface 29 × 59.7 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, retains its original thickness of 3 to 3.5 cm. It has been cut at the top and bottom, and the paint surface has been reinforced along those edges. The gilding has been renewed.

The composition repeats a number of features of the *Crucifixion* from the predella of the altarpiece in the former Silvestrine church in Montepulciano (see cat. 36 a), but includes in the middle ground a vast landscape with mountains, walled towns, and a system of roads and fields. The addition of the landscape suggests that the panel postdates the Montepulciano painting, which can be placed in the late 1450s. As is traditional in Crucifixion scenes, the sky is gold.

38 l. The Blessed Andrea Gallerani

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 51.4 × 17.8 cm.; painted
surface 48.3 × 12.7 cm. The panel has a vertical grain.
The engaged frame is original, but there are additions
above and below. The gilding is new.

Andrea Gallerani (d. 1251), a member of a noble Siennese family, was exiled from the city for murder. Upon securing permission to return, he founded the hospital of the Misericordia—of which the letter *M* on his cloak is a symbol. It was staffed by the third orders of the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Umiliati. The blessed wears the cloak and hat of a member of these lay orders. He also carries prayer beads. His devotion to continual prayer was well known, and in a diptych painted in the third quarter of the thirteenth century by an artist close to Guido da Siena (Siena Pinacoteca) he is shown with prayer beads in hand, tied to a crucifix.

Andrea was buried in San Domenico. Shortly after his death his cult grew, and indulgences were granted by the bishop of Siena for visits to his tomb. A visual repertory was soon established. Besides the above-mentioned diptych with scenes from his life, in the Misericordia there is a full-length image of him, recently erroneously attributed to Simone Martini and his workshop (Avanzati 1985, pp. 78–81), which became the prototype for Vecchietta (on the reliquary cupboard for the hospital) and for Giovanni di Paolo.

For further comments see below.

CS

38 m. The Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 52.4 × 17.8 cm.; painted
surface 49.3 × 12.7 cm. The panel has a vertical grain.
The engaged frame is original, but the upper molding
is cut and the lower one gone, and there are modern
extensions at both ends. The back of the left edge
shows evidence of the attachment of a panel at a right
angle to it, measuring approximately 2.2 cm. in depth.
The gilding is in large part modern.

The Dominican monk Ambrogio Sansedoni (1220–1286) studied in Paris and in Cologne. He gained renown as a preacher, and his audiences testified to seeing the dove of the Holy Spirit at his ear. This became his attribute. Ambrogio involved himself in the papal politics of his time, and was able to convince Clement IV to lift an in-

terdict against the Siennese. He also reformed the Roman schools of philosophy, took on peace missions for the pope, and preached for a crusade against the Saracens. He died in Siena as a result of a burst artery while preaching a Lenten sermon against usury, and was buried in San Domenico. As with Andrea Gallerani, his cult soon spread. He was much honored by the Dominican order, and as a favor to it, while in Siena in 1443, Pope Eugenius IV approved the official celebration of his feast (Bertucci 1968, cols. 629–633). Giovanni di Paolo's

Giovanni di Paolo

38 l



38 m



representation of Ambrogio derives from the figure in Taddeo di Bartolo's fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico and that on Vecchietta's reliquary cupboard for the hospital.

Carli's description of the Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece mentions pilaster panels with images of the two blessed figures shown here; of a Franciscan martyr, possibly Peter of Siena (d. 1322), and of Galganus (d. 1181), in Utrecht; and panels of Saint Catherine and Saint Bernardino of Siena, which are now lost. They were all native holy personages with whom the Sienese public could identify. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the commune had paid for the promotion of the cult of Gallerani and Sansedoni (Vauchez 1977), and was a driving force behind Bernardino's and Catherine's canonizations. Vecchietta represented them in several works that served as repositories of a new Sienese civic hagiography: the reliquary cupboard for the hospital (commissioned 1445)—the only work in which the Franciscan Peter does not appear (van Os 1974, pp. 15–23)—the fresco decorating the arch of

the high altar of the Baptistery (1450s), and the fresco of the *Madonna of Mercy* in the Palazzo Pubblico (after 1461). Although only Galganus, Bernardino, and Catherine were officially canonized, Giovanni di Paolo shows them all with halos. Vecchietta is careful about distinguishing their blessed or sanctified state in the first two works, but in the third, dating to after Catherine's canonization, all three receive halos; in the Baptistery frescoes halos were superimposed. Pius II, in his canonization bull for Catherine, saw a parallel between her life and that of Saint Bernardino, and they frequently were depicted together in Sienese works of art.

The panels with Ambrogio Sansedoni, Peter of Siena, and Galganus came from the right-hand pilaster and that of Andrea Gallerani from the left-hand pilaster. Besides these saints and the missing representations of Catherine and Bernardino, some of the other Sienese saints and blessed, such as Pier Pettinaio, Sorore, and Agostino Novello, may also have been part of the pilasters. cs

PELLEGRINO DI MARIANO

(Pellegrino di Mariano Rossini)

active by 1449; died November 7, 1492

Pellegrino di Mariano is best known as an illuminator, although he was also active as a panel painter and a painter of frescoes. The miniatures in the Gradual (Biblioteca Comunale, Siena: codex H.I.2) from the Augustinian community of Lecceto were executed in the decade before his only signed and dated painting, the *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Bernardino* of 1450 (Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis). Giovanni di Paolo illuminated three miniatures in the Gradual, and was probably Pellegrino's teacher. At this time, Pellegrino was involved in the decoration of a (now-destroyed) chapel dedicated to Saint Bernardino in the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, commissioned by the rector Urbano di Pietro del Bello (in office 1444–50), a fervent supporter of Bernardino's canonization.

In the early 1460s, Pellegrino, Sano di Pietro, and a third, unidentified artist illuminated the choir books for Pope Pius II Piccolomini's new church in Pienza. Pellegrino profited from the close working relationship with Sano—a sophisticated illuminator—and he adopted the style of Sano's border decorations in subsequent projects. The papal patronage probably helped him obtain commissions for the choir books of the cathedral in Siena (Pius's nephew, Francesco [1440–1503], later Pius III, was then cardinal) and for those of the Spedale della Scala, on which he was employed from 1465 to 1481; he sometimes worked on volumes with miniatures by Liberale da Verona and by the Florentine Francesco Rosselli. Throughout his career, Pellegrino's figurative style remained constant. However, under Liberale's and Girolamo da Cremona's influence, he gradually altered his borders and lettering so that they became more structured and included putti and fantastical anthropomorphic forms.

Keeping in mind that illuminations in choir books were displayed publicly on the feast days that they illustrated, Pellegrino's direct style must have been pleasing and, consequently, was popular. He produced the type of art that a private devotional organization like the Confraternità di Santa Caterina della Notte expected and required when it ordered an altarpiece of the Crucifixion from him in 1477. The artist, whose birth date is unknown, died in 1492, and was buried in San Domenico.

39 a. The Initial S, with Christ Calling Saint Peter (page from an Antiphonary)

Bernard H. Breslauer, New York

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 53 × 38 cm.

The miniature illustrates a text for the feast of the Cathedra Petri ("Symon Petre antequam de navi vocarem te novi"). The sheet is cropped close to the edges of the decorative border. The page number in red Roman numerals at the upper right is probably also cut. It now reads as XXXX, but is missing the final period and possibly some of its digits. The coat of arms in the lower border

has been reworked in the same manner as that of catalogue 36 b, c; originally, it would have contained the emblem of the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala and of the hospital's rector from 1456 to 1476/77, Niccolò Ricoveri. Inside the wreath and around the arms the date 1471 appears; there is no reason to suspect that it is not original.

The particular combination of text and scene deserves comment. On the page for the feast of the Cathedra Petri, or chairing of Saint Peter, in one of the cathedral's Antiphonaries (Piccolomini Library, Siena: codex 13.0, f. 7 v; see Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 285–286), Liberale da Verona depicts the Calling of Saint Peter and Saint An-





drew, his brother, but in Sienese choir books the scene in which both apostles are shown in the boat is usually reserved for the feast of Saint Andrew—although with a different text. In an Antiphonary for the cathedral (Piccolomini Library, Siena: codex 11.M, f. 4; Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 73), of about 1481–82, Pellegrino di Mariano painted an illumination for the feast of Saint Andrew in which both brothers are gathering their fishnets, with Andrew responding first to Christ's call. Otherwise, that miniature is very similar in style and composition to this Breslauer page.

The actual chairing of the saint is not depicted here since it does not correspond to the text, which evokes the calling of Peter from a boat. Pellegrino has adapted the iconography to suit the significance of the feast by eliminating Andrew and by showing Christ blessing Peter and handing him the keys of the Church in celebration of Peter as the successor of Christ, and of the Church triumphant. The Cathedra Petri was one of three Church feasts held in Peter's honor.

The abbreviated page number and the many lacunae in the hospital's choir books make the identification of the original location of this sheet somewhat problematic. However, it may come from the Antiphonary (67.5 × 48 cm.; Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena: codex 83.C; see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 228) covering the nine-week period following Christmas Eve, including the feast of the Cathedra Petri, celebrated in Siena on February 22. The book is missing all its illuminated pages including folio 49, which may have been the original position of the present Breslauer page.

CS

39 b. The Initial A, with the Three Maries at the Tomb (page from an Antiphonary)

Bernard H. Breslauer, New York

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 57.7 × 39.4 cm.

The miniature illustrates an Easter antiphon ("Angelus domini descendit"). In the lower center of the border, two putti support a wreath containing a coat of arms that has been altered, but was originally that of the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, with the institution's emblematic ladder on the left in the black field, and, in the gold field on the right, a rampant griffin, the blazon of Niccolò Ricoveri, rector of the hospital between 1456 and 1476/77. The arms can be seen on other sheets in the hospital's choir books (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo; see, for example, Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, fig. 199). In the other cuttings from the same series shown here (cat. 39 a, c), the arms were similarly changed to disguise the provenance. A large number of pages from the Santa Maria della Scala choir books were systemat-

ically removed in the early nineteenth century and have not yet come to light, although some, bound together, were bought by the commune of Siena in 1869 (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena: codex 124.3). A recent published listing of the missing pages should make other identifications possible (see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 212–32).

This sheet bears the number *iiii* in the center right. The folio that should bear this number and contain the initial antiphons for the Paschal feast is missing from the Antiphonary, which encompasses Holy Saturday to the octave of the Ascension (63.5 × 42.5 cm.; in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena: codex 6.86.F). The script of the pagination of this Breslauer sheet corresponds with the other page numbers in this manuscript and, taking into account the reduction of the borders, its dimensions are close. However, the historiated initials are missing, making it impossible to determine whether Pellegrino di Mariano executed other miniatures for the Antiphonary.

Neither the choir book nor the page is dated. The miniature was probably painted about the time of the page dated 1471 included here (cat. 39 a). In any case, it definitely seems earlier than 1474—the date of the Gradual (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena: codex 101.7), whose border decoration is more densely modeled, and whose shadowed foliate and rosette patterns evince the influence of Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona. The dragon that makes up the initial A relates to a lettering type that Giovanni di Paolo created in the 1420s (cat. 29) and used again in the 1440s for the Lecceto choir books (cat. 30). Pellegrino di Mariano also collaborated on this project. However, he makes use of the admittedly common motif several times (for example, Piccolomini Library, Siena: codex 4.D, f. 35; codex 11.M, folios 25 v, 35 v; see Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 58, 72, 74), so that it cannot be a guide to dating. In a choir book illuminated for the cathedral in 1481 (Piccolomini Library, Siena: codex 9.I, f. 3), the artist repeats the composition of this Breslauer sheet in a miniature of the same subject.

CS

39 c. The Creation of Heaven and Earth (page from an Antiphonary)

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. 58.1 × 40.5 cm.

The miniature (23.5 × 18.4 cm.) illustrates the text for Septuagesima ("In principio fecit Deus celum et ter[ram]": Genesis 1:1).

The image derives from Sienese representations of the Creed, and from Giovanni di Paolo's panel of *The Creation*



from the predella of the Guelfi altarpiece (cat. 32 a, b). Ten spheres circumscribe the earth: The outermost one contains the symbols of the zodiac; the sun appears at the top of the solar sphere; a half-moon is in Venus; and there are stars in Venus, Mars, and Mercury. God the Father, shown accompanied by red seraphim against a streaked sky, sets the spheres in motion. The border consists of a foliate pattern growing out of a vase on either side. There are fantastic birds above, and two putti at the bottom holding a garlanded wreath with a coat of arms. As in catalogue 39 a, b, the coat of arms was repainted to disguise the provenance. Originally, it would have incorporated the blazon of the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala and of its rector, Niccolò Ricoveri. The page appears to have been removed from one of the choir books commissioned by Ricoveri for the hospital's church, since the measurements correspond. There is no indication, however,

of an original folio number on either the *recto* or *verso* to assist in determining in which volume it appeared.

Pellegrino di Mariano illuminated an initial *I* without a historiated miniature for the same office of Septuagesima in an Antiphonary belonging to the cathedral (codex 5.E, f. 4 v; see Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 80). That choir book encompasses the period of Septuagesima through the second week before Easter. It is likely that the Fitzwilliam page comes from the hospital's Antiphonary (62 × 43.5 cm.; Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena: codex 84.D; see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 228–31), which covers some of the same period. The volume is missing folios 1, 34, 60, 93, 133, and 203.

The illumination is one of the artist's finest works. It was painted in the mid-1470s—probably after the sheet dated 1471 (cat. 39 a) and prior to 1476/77, the time of the rector Ricoveri's death.

CS

DOMENICO DI BARTOLO

(Domenico di Bartolo di Ghezzi)

active between 1420 and 1444 / 45

Domenico di Bartolo is perhaps the least appreciated major Siennese artist of the fifteenth century. His fascination with Florentine art and his creation of a minutely descriptive, often crudely realistic style run counter to the mainstream of painting in Siena, but these very qualities made him a crucial figure for later developments and assured him a unique place as a chronicler of everyday life. He is the only Siennese painter of the early fifteenth century to have received commissions in Florence.

Domenico is first documented in 1420 as an apprentice on an unidentified project for the cathedral of Siena (Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo, *Libro rosso*, n. 707, f. 6 v), and he is listed in the rolls of the painters' guild compiled from 1427. He was probably trained by an artist like Martino di Bartolomeo, who was on close personal and professional terms with the two greatest Siennese sculptors, Jacopo della Quercia and Francesco da Valdambro. Quercia's sculpture informs Domenico's earliest dated work, the 1433 *Madonna of Humility* in the Siena Pinacoteca. This picture, with its precocious assimilation of Florentine art—interpreted, however, with a distinctly Siennese accent—is one of the landmarks of Renaissance painting, and its inscriptions, inspired by the contemporary sermons of Saint Bernardino (Strehlke 1984), are among the earliest in Siena to use humanist lettering.

No less innovative was his 1434 design for the pavement of the cathedral of the emperor Sigismund enthroned in a Renaissance architectural setting. In 1435, Jacopo della Quercia was appointed superintendent (*operaio*) of the cathedral, and Domenico's commission to paint frescoes in the sacristy illustrating scenes from the lives of Siena's patron saints was secured through him. Domenico's subsequent activity in Florence, Asciano, and Perugia coincides with Quercia's absence from Siena.

In Florence, Domenico painted altarpieces for the Church of the Carmine, where Masaccio had frescoed the Brancacci Chapel, and for Santa Trinità. Both are described by Vasari, but only one can be tentatively identified with a surviving fragment (cat. 41). In Perugia, where he completed an altarpiece for the convent of Santa Giuliana in 1438 (Galleria Nazionale), Domenico would have studied Domenico Veneziano's fresco cycle for the Baglioni family. His own cycle of frescoes for the pilgrims' hospice (the Pellegrinaio) of the Spedale della Scala is unthinkable without this Florentine and Umbrian experience.

The Spedale della Scala frescoes, painted between 1441 and 1444, constitute Domenico's most ambitious endeavor and open a new stage in the history of Siennese Renaissance painting. Their secular subjects, illustrating the charitable duties of the hospital on one wall and its history on the other, are unique for their time, and they provided Domenico an opportunity to fully deploy his considerable narrative and descriptive gifts. Some of the interiors in the scenes of charitable acts reproduce actual spaces of the hospital populated with contemporaries of the artist; all of them reveal a full command of perspective. Not since Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes of *Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico had Siennese life been chronicled with a like attention to detail. By contrast, the scenes of the hospital's history reveal an intentionally fantastical vein, Gothic ornament overwhelming Renaissance structures that seem lifted from an architect's model book. These scenes may well reflect Domenico Veneziano's

decorations (now destroyed) for the hospital of Sant'Egidio in Florence, and they seem to anticipate aspects of Ferrarese painting, possibly through a common source in Pisanello.

Domenico's last commission was for the *Coronation of the Virgin*, a fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico that was completed in 1445 by Sano di Pietro, who may have collaborated on the project from the outset (see cat. 15). When Domenico died, presumably in 1444/45, Sassetta, Giovanni di Paolo, Sano di Pietro, and Vecchietta were at the height of their powers, and it fell to a younger generation of artists, headed by Matteo di Giovanni, to reap the fruits of Domenico's attempt to create a native, realistic style of painting responsive to the nascent principles of Renaissance art.

40. Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter and Paul

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 53 × 31 cm.

This remarkably conceived picture, with the Madonna and Child enthroned in a shell niche surmounted by wreath-bearing putti and flanked by the apostles Peter and Paul, is one of the earliest and most successful attempts by a Sienese artist to assimilate the new vocabulary of painting created by Masaccio in Florence in the 1420s. Although small in scale, the figures make a powerful impression, their features modeled in terms of a single light source from the left, their halos shown in perspective rather than as flat disks. The Virgin's pose, distant gaze, and, in particular, her firm grasp on the infant derive from Masaccio's Virgin in the Sant'Ambrogio altarpiece, painted in collaboration with Masolino about 1424–25 (Uffizi, Florence). Some critics (see Shapley 1979, pp. 157–58) have emphasized its similarity to the early work of Filippo Lippi—specifically, to three small panels of the Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels, in the Collegiata, Empoli, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the Cini Collection, Venice. However, in those works Lippi was concerned with the rational placement of figures in a complex architectural setting. Domenico di Bartolo, by contrast, shows the figures in a shallow space against a gold background: Although they are monumental in conception, they function independently of their surroundings. For this reason, the painting must predate the artist's more masterly *Madonna of Humility* of 1433 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena), in which a convincing, three-dimensional spatial arrangement is the underlying principle of the composition.

The recessed white marble throne, the colored slab inlays, the inverted shell (originally shown in the opposite direction), and the three sculptured putti holding a garland herald the arrival of the new architectural vocabulary of the Florentine Renaissance in Siena, although

this does not mean that the painter's source was necessarily Florentine. At this very time Jacopo della Quercia and his shop were at work on the ciborium of the baptismal font (contracted for on June 20, 1427; confirmed the following year, with work continuing into the mid-1430s), which is inspired by Brunelleschian architecture. Quercia had frequently employed antique decorative motifs in his earlier work. Putti and garlands appear most notably in the tomb of Illaria del Carretto (1406) in Lucca, but also in one of the architectural settings of the Fonte Gaia (1409–19). The soft drapery folds in the painting also recall Quercia's sculptural style: They are a reductive variant of the drapery of the prophets in the niches of the ciborium.

The painting's modest scale indicates that it was made for a private patron. Although the subject is not extraordinary, the presence of the two apostolic founders of the Church and the antique-inspired motifs suggest that it may have been executed during that heady period when the German king Sigismund visited Siena—from July 12, 1432, to April 25, 1433—while waiting to go to Rome to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Unfortunately, the panel's early provenance is not known.

CS

41. Madonna and Child Enthroned

The Art Museum, Princeton University

Tempera and gold on wood. 94.5 × 70.5 cm.; painted surface 91 × 70.3 cm. The sides of the panel have been planed and the bottom cut, but the raised gesso decoration (*pastiglia*) of the small arches is original.

Inscribed (in the Virgin's halo): AVE MARIA GRATIA P[LENA]; (in the Child's halo): SUM LUX MUNDI

Although it is impossible to determine exactly how much the dimensions of this impressive and solemn image have been reduced, the panel certainly once showed the enthroned Virgin full length, and was the center of a large



polyptych. The sharply receding upper edges of the draped throne and the foreshortened curves and spirals of the armrests suggest the imposing scale, enhanced by a low viewpoint (in the abdomen of the Virgin). The carefully controlled light entering from the left strikes the terminal spiral of the right-hand armrest, on which the Virgin casts a shadow, and establishes the volumes of the figures. The rays of the Virgin's halo are reserved for the gold background behind the throne to clearly distinguish between the natural light source and the sacred radiance.

The high-backed throne, its projecting corners cropped by the frame, and the calculated study of light recall the center panel of the altarpiece painted by Masaccio for the Carmine in Pisa in 1426 (now in the National Gallery, London; see fig. 1). The pose of the Madonna and Child, on the other hand, is adopted from Jacopo della Quercia's freestanding allegorical figure of Charity (Rhea Silvia) for the Fonte Gaia (1409–19). Domenico re-

used the pose for a detail of a mother and two children in his fresco showing the Distribution of Alms (1440), in the Pellegrinaio of the Spedale della Scala (Brandi 1949, p. 119, considered the Princeton picture contemporary with this scene). A point of comparison for the rounded forms of the figures and for the double chin, simply delineated eyes, curved brows, and pursed lips of the Virgin is provided by the center panel of Domenico's altarpiece in Perugia, dated 1438. Although the throne in the Perugia altarpiece is more elaborate, it has the same rectangular, high-backed box shape. However, both aesthetically and emotionally, the Princeton fragment is a vastly superior, more carefully conceived work of art. There is, for example, no parallel in the Perugia altarpiece for the beautifully foreshortened right hand of the Virgin or for the distinctly Masaccio-inspired nude Child.

A date in the mid- to late 1430s suggests that the Princeton *Madonna and Child* might be identified with one of two documented works. The first is an altarpiece Domenico was contracted to paint in 1437 for the church of Sant'Agostino in Asciano, east of Siena. There are no further records of the altarpiece—which may, indeed, never have been executed due to other obligations. The second (and, on the whole, the more likely) work is the altarpiece for the high altar of the Carmine in Florence. Vasari recorded the altarpiece together with an *Annunciation* in the church of Santa Trinità, placing Domenico's activity around 1436: "Furono l'opere di costui intorno agli anni del Signore 1436; e l'ultime furono, in Santa Trinità di Firenze, una tavola dentrovi la Nunziata; e nella chiesa del Carmine la tavola dell'altar maggiore" (1568, 1906 ed., II, p. 41). These works are not mentioned in early Florentine guidebooks, but Vasari's information suggests that both were signed and at least one was dated.

There is little concrete information about the main chapel in the Carmine that was dedicated to the Virgin and decorated by Agnolo Gaddi (active by 1351–1396) with a cycle of frescoes showing scenes from her life. The chapel was under the patronage of the Soderini family, who had Sienese connections. Saint Catherine had written letters to Niccolò Soderini (d. 1382), and was a guest in his house in the Costa di San Giorgio during a visit to Florence in 1378, at the time of the Ciompi uprising, when there were demonstrations against her presence in the city. Niccolò was buried beneath the high altar of the Carmine. Francesco Soderini (b. 1376) is known to have been a benefactor of the Carmelites, and his second wife, Lucrezia di Giovanni Tegliacci, whom he married in 1431, was Sienese (Litta 1902, VIII, pl. III). These facts may have some bearing on the choice of a Sienese artist to paint the altarpiece, which can only be traced through the seventeenth century. As early as 1568, the high altar and choir underwent significant alterations (Procacci 1932,



Figure 1. Masaccio. *Madonna and Child Enthroned* (from the Pisa Polyptych). National Gallery, London

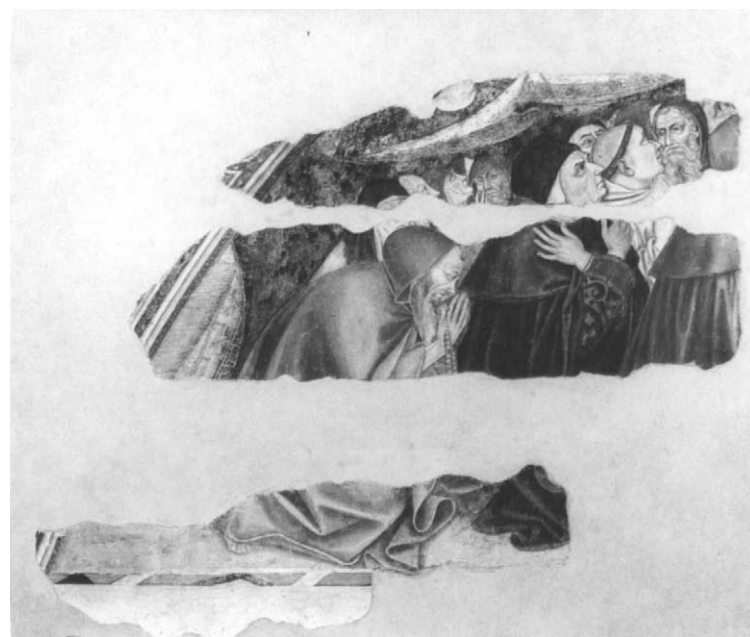


pp. 176–80), and in 1593 a tabernacle designed by Bernardo Buontalenti was placed on the altar. Baldinucci (1681, I, p. 62) nonetheless speaks of a *tavola* by Domenico di Bartolo on an unspecified altar in the Carmine, suggesting that Domenico's altarpiece had been adapted or simply moved to another location in the church. It is not mentioned by Richa (1762, X, p. 18). In 1771, a fire swept through the Carmine, which could conceivably explain the cut-down, somewhat rubbed state of the Princeton picture. The first certain recent record of the panel is its purchase by Dan Fellows Platt prior to 1907 (Perkins 1907, p. 78).

In the first half of the fifteenth century Carmelite churches in Tuscany contained some of the most progressive works of the Early Renaissance, including Masaccio and Masolino's fresco cycle in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, Masaccio's altarpiece in Pisa, and Sassetta's *Arte della Lana* altarpiece in Siena (see cat. 1 a–f). While these were commissioned by private individuals or guilds, Carmelites must have kept close watch on their progress, and they may have exercised a role in the selection of the artists. Domenico di Bartolo's authorship of the Carmine altarpiece should be evaluated with this in mind, for, during the years immediately following the death of Masaccio in 1428 and the departure of the resident Carmelite artist, Filippo Lippi, for Padua in 1433/34, Domenico was the most prominent exponent of the new, realist style in Tuscany.

The Siennese restorer and forger Icilio Joni may have restored and framed the *Madonna*. In his autobiography ([1932], pp. 218–20, 226, 230–33) he states that he was employed by Platt first as a framer of pictures that were being restored by Luigi Cavenaghi in Milan, and later as his restorer. Mason Perkins, who first published it, probably was the agent in its acquisition. Perkins and Joni worked together, and almost all of Platt's pictures were purchased through Perkins. On the back of a now-untraceable photograph in the Berenson archives at I Tatti, the provenance was given as Pedulli, a Florentine savant who is mentioned several times in Joni's memoirs ([1932], pp. 234–37). (I would like to thank Gianni Mazzoni for his observations on Joni's activity for Platt.) The Berenson photograph also has a Siennese photographer's label.

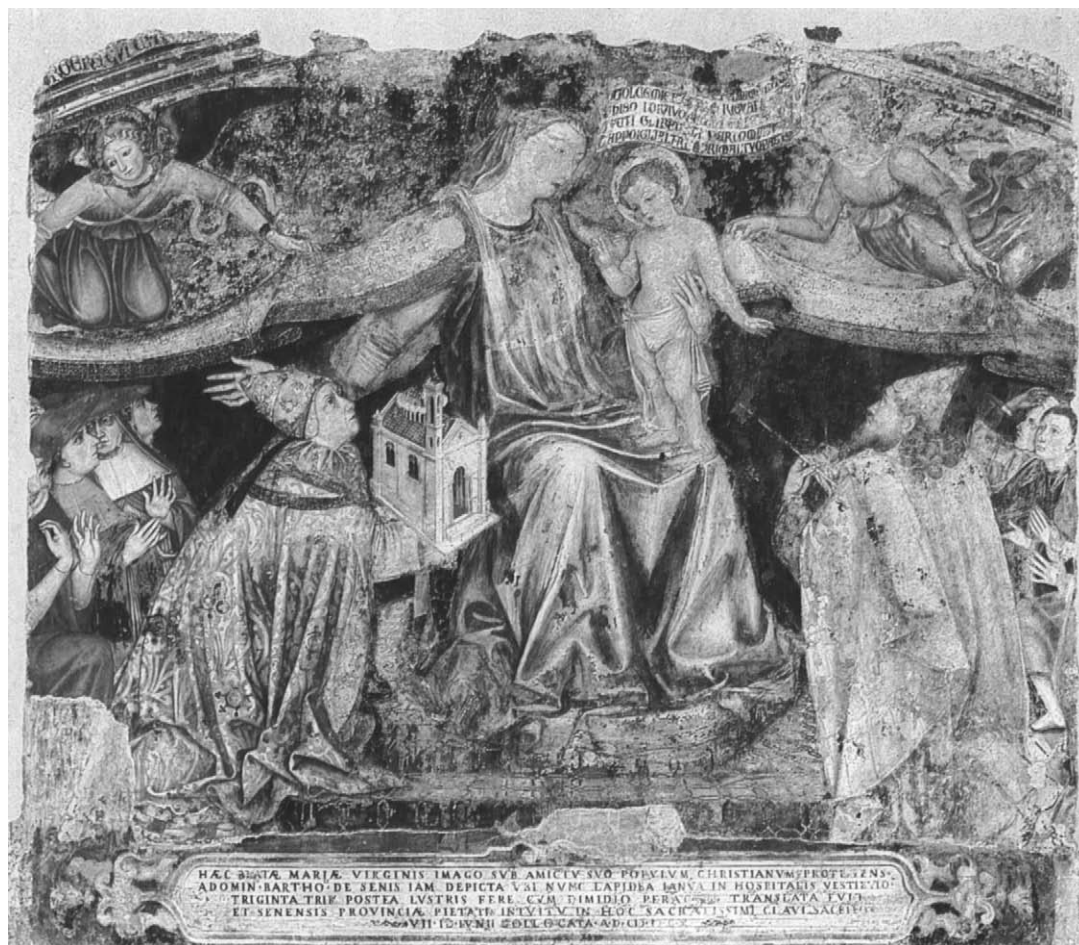
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42. Madonna of Mercy

Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, and Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

Three detached fresco fragments with gold embellishments. Left 155 × 172 cm.; center 231 × 262 cm.; right 155 × 172.5 cm. Large areas of the fresco were executed *a secco*, particularly the elaborate decorative patterns of the costumes: The artist made an outline in the wet plaster, which he later colored over *a secco*, adding gold and silver details. Where *a secco* passages are lost, the *intonaco* drawing is visible (for example, in the costume of the man taking off his hat, behind the emperor). The Virgin's robes were underpainted in a gray-blue color to which azurite blue, a costly pigment, and gold were applied *a secco*. The emperor's costume, much of which is gone, seems to have been largely executed in this manner as well. The folds of the Virgin's and the emperor's garments were indicated with incised lines, probably with the aid of a cartoon, whereas for the complicated floral pattern of the pope's mantle a pricked cartoon was



employed—as the dotted lines, or *spolveri*, reveal. This same technical diversity also characterizes the Pellegrinaio frescoes. It has a long tradition in Siena, and can be observed in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's cycle of *Good and Bad Government* (1338–40) in the Palazzo Pubblico.

Inscribed (on the scroll near the Virgin's head), and now quite damaged: QVESTO PVPVL SOTO 'L MIE MANTE CORSE/O DOLCE MIE FIGLVOL RIGVARDA FISO/CHI SO LOR AVOCATA ET TV 'L SOCCORSO TVCTI GLI BENE DI PER LO MI AMORE/DAPPOI GLI ALTRI E PRIMA 'L TVO PASTORE ("O my sweet son, look upon this people who hasten beneath the mantle of she who is their advocate and you, their salvation, and for the love I bear grant them all good things, and above all your guidance"); (below): HÆC BEATÆ MARLÆ VIRGINIS IMAGO SVB AMICTV SVO POPVLVM CHRISTIANVM PROTOGENS•/A DOMIN•BARTHO• DE SENIS IAM DEPICTA VBI NVNC LAPIDEA IANVA IN HOSPITALIS VESTIBVLO/TRIGINTA TRIB[VS] POSTEA LVSTRIS FERRE CVM DIMIDIO PERACTIS TRANSLATA FVIT/ET SENENSIS PROVINCIÆ PIETATIS INTVITV IN HOC SACRATISSIMI CLAVI SACELLO/VII•ID•IVNII COLLOCATA•A•D•CD•ICX

These three fragments formed a lunette-shaped image of the Madonna of Mercy in the former reliquary chapel of the Spedale della Scala. In 1610, Agostino Chigi, the hospital's rector, transformed the chapel (located in what is now an emergency room) into an atrium. Because of popular veneration of the image, the center section of the fresco, together with its supporting wall, was removed and installed in the Cappella del Sacro Chiodo (later the Sagrestia Grande) under a marble baldachin. The inscription at the bottom commemorates this relocation. During restoration of the image in 1969, the two lateral fragments were retrieved in a recess behind the Virgin and subsequently deposited in the Siena Pinacoteca. Their colors are better preserved than those of the center fragment, which is worn throughout, and in which the faces of the Madonna and Child have undergone pious retouching.

Domenico di Bartolo was paid for the fresco on April 2, 1444, at the conclusion of work on the extensive narra-

tive cycle in the Pellegrinaio (the hospital's reception room and main infirmary). The fresco signaled a major change in the decoration of the chapel, which had been built about 1366 to contain a group of Byzantine relics that the hospital had purchased in Venice in 1357. In 1443, Pope Eugenius IV, who was in Siena at the time, granted the relics new indulgences. As a result, Giovanni Buzzichelli, the hospital's Maecenas-like rector from 1433 to 1444, initiated plans for a new, larger chapel to house the relics. This became the Cappella del Sacro Chiodo, in recognition of the hospital's most precious relic, a nail from the cross. It was in this chapel, completed during the tenure of Buzzichelli's successor and frescoed by Vecchietta between 1446 and 1449, that Domenico di Bartolo's fresco was installed in 1610. The *Madonna of Mercy* was, therefore, commissioned to give new meaning to the earlier reliquary chapel, which was renamed the Cappella del Manto, after the fresco.

The Cappella del Manto had a groin vault of no great height. To judge from the placement of Domenico Beccafumi's fresco of *The Visitation* (1514), still *in situ*, the *Madonna of Mercy* must have occupied one of the lunettes below the vault. In the 1444 payment, the fresco is described as located "sopra la gratichola di chieixa." The word "gratichola" (Tommaseo and Bellini 1869, pp. 1190–91), suggests that below it was a grille—not, as Gallavotti Cavallero (1985, p. 168) suggests, a niche to contain the relics. The function of this grille can be deduced from the discovery during the 1969 restoration of a monochrome fresco (200 × 265 cm.; on deposit in the Pinacoteca) on the reverse side of the *Madonna of Mercy* showing the rector serving the sick. This work can be attributed to Carlo di Giovanni (active between 1445 and 1458) on the basis of a record of payment that refers to its position as "sopra alarcho che va nela chapela" ("above the arch that leads into the chapel"; Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, p. 187). The *Madonna of Mercy* was, therefore, on the west wall of the chapel, over an arch that opened into what was then the women's infirmary. It would have been well above eye level. Nonetheless, the vanishing point of its carefully conceived perspective construction is in the Virgin's breast rather than *sotto in giù*.

In 1492, the purported remains of the hospital's mystical founder, the Blessed Sorore, were discovered and placed in an altar under the fresco (Allegretti 1733, col. 825; Carli 1977, p. 80).¹ Presumably at this time the opening in the wall was filled in. In 1515, Beccafumi's triptych of the Trinity (Siena Pinacoteca) was placed on the altar beneath Domenico di Bartolo's fresco.

The *Madonna of Mercy* was a subject with a century-old tradition in Sienese painting. Just a few years prior to the date of this fresco, in 1431, Giovanni di Paolo had treated the theme conventionally in an altarpiece for the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, in which the Virgin

stands stiffly, extending her mantle with her hands. Domenico di Bartolo energized the old iconographic formula, endowing it with a novel spatial setting and retaining only the gold background, which is unusual for a fresco. The Virgin is enthroned with the Christ Child, and is positioned obliquely rather than frontally. The devout on either side are divided into Church and lay categories instead of by gender, and the pope and emperor are given the roles of special supplicants—one holding a church and the other a scepter. The motif of the angels lifting the Virgin's mantle had appeared in a fourteenth-century Sienese *Madonna of Mercy* by Bartolo di Fredi in Pienza as well as in Bernardo Rossellino's relief of 1434–36 for the Misericordia in Arezzo.

In the poetic inscription alongside her head, the Virgin commends to Christ all people who seek suffrage under her mantle. Her emphatic gesture toward the pope, whom Christ blesses, and to other members of the Church implies that the populace and its highest authority, the emperor, are also being entrusted to the care of the Church. Among the ecclesiastics is the hospital's rector, Buzzichelli, the head of the oblates who administered the hospital. He is shown in dark robes, wearing a cap. Carli (1977, p. 75) identified the monk behind the rector as an ideal rendering of the Blessed Sorore, and the woman on the far right as either Petra or Francesca, the wife of Buzzichelli. It has been suggested that the pope is either Eugenius IV (r. 1431–47) or Alexander IV (r. 1254–61) and that the emperor is Sigismund (1368–1437), Frederick II (1194–1250), or Henry VII of Luxembourg (about 1275–1313). However, the surviving documents record no names, and there are neither coats of arms nor other symbols to suggest a positive identification. Fragments of border inscriptions that may have been helpful are no longer legible. Most likely, the figures are meant to signify the offices of pope and emperor, rather than to portray specific men. Nonetheless, even if an actual emperor and pope are not depicted here, it is not unlikely that the historical Sigismund and Eugenius inspired Domenico's representations. He made a portrait of Sigismund in 1432/33, and he certainly knew Eugenius's appearance from the pope's presence in Siena in 1443.

The prominent positions of the pope and emperor underscore both the political and the religious significance of the image. The men are virtually equals in that they kneel on the same step of the dais, although the pope is clearly favored by his placement to the Virgin's right, by her gesture, and by Christ's blessing; he also leans closer to her than the emperor. Throughout the hospital's history, popes and emperors granted the institution privileges and largesse, and much of its strength and reputation were due to this support. In the fifteenth century, the hospital ceased to be an independent body of oblates and lay brothers, and came under the control of the Sienese

government, which appointed its rector. Before that, it had been subject to the jurisdiction of the Canons of the cathedral. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there had been a considerable struggle for the hospital's control, since it was the wealthiest organization in Siena, and it had often sought to assert its independence or to obtain an impartial decision about its administration by going over the heads of civic and Church authorities and appealing to the pope or emperor. The fresco celebrates these connections enjoyed by the hospital, as well as those of the city with the papacy and the empire.

During its restoration, the fresco was removed from the wall, revealing the preparatory drawing, or *sinopia* (233.5 × 269 cm.), which was then also detached. It proves how essential a role drawing played in the preparation of the fresco, for it is not merely a generalized outline of the composition, as is so often the case, but an actual working drawing in which various compositional possibilities were established and some areas—particularly, the Madonna and Child—were developed to a high degree of definition. This suggests that the *sinopia* may have been used as a presentation drawing for the patron's approval, which would explain why several important details having some bearing on the iconography are either presented with more than one solution, or else are altered in the finished fresco. For example, Christ's head is turned toward the right in the *sinopia*, whereas in the fresco he directs his gaze and blessing to the pope alone.

Two alternatives for the placement of the Virgin's right arm are shown. In one, it is angled downward so that her hand would rest on the pope's shoulder, while in the other she gestures toward the kneeling cardinals. Apparently there was some indecision about this detail, because in the fresco stage the arm was first painted in the former position, and then adjusted *a secco* to the second (*a secco* passages have fallen off). The change was probably decided upon very quickly, because her hand is executed in proper *buon fresco*. In the *sinopia*, the pope's arms seem to be crossed, but the finished representation of him holding a church may have been determined by the wish to allude to the indulgences Eugenius IV granted for the relics in 1443. Originally, the Virgin's throne was also drawn in detail. The position and attributes of the emperor caused the most problems, probably because of indecision about whether to place him on the same hierarchical level as the pope. A circle encloses the area where the artist worked out these passages. In his left hand, the emperor held an oversized orb, which, in the final fresco, has been considerably reduced and transferred to his right hand.

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1. The assertion by the seventeenth-century archivist Girolamo Macchi that the translation took place in 1444 has no early documentary basis, although it is reported as fact in Gallavotti Cavallero (1985, p. 260, n. 135).

VECCHIETTA

(Lorenzo di Pietro)

1410–1480

The origin of Vecchietta's curious nickname, meaning "the little old one," is not known. It first appears in a document of 1442, and repeatedly thereafter. The artist's training was not strictly Sienese. An attraction to the few modern, non-Sienese works in the city—Gentile da Fabriano's *Madonna de'Notai* on the exterior of the notaries' palace, and Donatello's relief for the Baptistry font—may have prompted the artist to complete his education elsewhere: He is not documented in Siena between 1428, when he enrolled in the painters' guild, and 1439, when he was twenty-nine years old and working as a sculptor in the cathedral. No records account for the intervening years, but the most probable explanation is that he joined Masolino's workshop and was employed by the erudite Cardinal Branda Castiglione first in San Clemente in Rome (the foreshortened horse and rider and the landscape in Masolino's *Crucifixion* bear close analogies with Vecchietta's subsequent work, and may be his contribution) and then in Castiglione Olona, near Milan. The Castiglione Olona frescoes, which include not only a cycle in the Collegiata devoted to Saints Stephen and Lawrence, but the decoration of a small chapel in the cardinal's palace—only recently discovered—have been dated as late as the 1460s (van Os 1974, pp. 54–61), yet for reasons of style they must predate 1439. Among the frescoes in the palace that merit reconsideration as works by Vecchietta is the landscape usually assigned to Masolino.

One of Vecchietta's frescoes in Castiglione Olona includes a view of the Santo in Padua, which the artist may well have visited. Certainly, the archaeologically oriented, somewhat academic humanism that flourished in various North Italian centers at that time parallels Vecchietta's later interest in quotations from the antique and in ideal architectural settings. In subsequent years, painting took its place alongside sculpture, architecture, and military engineering—interests that were passed on to his most gifted pupil, Francesco di Giorgio.

Given Vecchietta's standing as a representative of an advanced cultural outlook, it is not surprising that the hospital, whose officials were consciously promoting a progressive, realistic style of painting in Siena, was the first Sienese institution to grant him a major commission. He came to establish a lifelong association with the organization. In 1441 he frescoed several scenes in the Pellegrinaio (the pilgrims' hospice), one of which survives, and between 1445 and 1449 he painted the *Arliquiera* (a reliquary cabinet, now in the Siena Pinacoteca) and a fresco cycle representing allegories of the articles of the Creed for the new reliquary chapel. The projects tapped his greatest abilities. The reliquary cabinet proved his talent for creating an imagery for Siena's saints and blessed, as well as for the invention of classically inspired architectural settings; his experience with Branda had prepared him to tackle the complicated iconographies of the fresco programs, for which there were no local precedents. The modernity of Vecchietta's paintings in the hospital and in the Martinuzzi Chapel in San Francesco (cat. 44) may have had its detractors. In any event, except for the two remarkable scenes of Christ's Passion (in the Baptistry), Vecchietta's work in the next decade shows a notable slackening in imagination and in quality.

The elevation of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini to the papacy as Pius II (r. 1458–64) seems to have had a salutary effect on Vecchietta's career. His relationship with the humanist pope was somewhat similar to his earlier one with Branda. He painted a *biccherna* cover celebrating Pius's coronation, and a *gabella*

cover showing the investiture of a papal nephew as cardinal. The architectural setting of the *gabella* cover (Archivio di Stato, Siena) reflects Vecchietta's classicizing approach to architecture. For Pius's church in Pienza he created his masterpiece, the *Assumption of the Virgin* (*in situ*), in which the setting of the lateral panels is a monumental coffered vault, and the figures are conceived in terms of sculpture. This new direction stems from contact with Florentine art—with Domenico Veneziano, but especially with Donatello, who was resident in Siena from 1457 to 1459 and whose highly emotive sculpture left a deep impression on Vecchietta.

From the mid-1460s until his death, sculpture displaced painting as Vecchietta's primary activity. Between 1467 and 1472 he designed and cast the large ciborium for the high altar of the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala (the work was transferred from the hospital church to the high altar of the cathedral in 1506), and in 1475 he sculpted two wood figures for churches in Narni, the *Saint Bernardino* (now in the Bargello, Florence) and the *Saint Anthony Abbot* (in Narni Cathedral). Numerous smaller works in bronze are documented, but only the *Flagellation* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the *Resurrection* of 1472 in The Frick Collection, New York, survive as testimony to this activity. In 1477, the hospital conceded the artist a burial chapel in its church, for which he painted an altarpiece of the Madonna and Child with Four Saints (now in the Siena Pinacoteca) and cast a bronze figure of the Resurrected Christ, one of the masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture. The terracotta *Burial and Assumption of the Virgin* for the church of San Francesco in Lucca (now in the Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi) was finished after his death by Neroccio de'Landi.

Sienese painting of the second half of the fifteenth century is not explicable without Vecchietta, in whose studio almost all of the leading artists of the younger generation, including Benvenuto di Giovanni, Francesco di Giorgio, and Neroccio de'Landi, spent some time.

43. The Nativity

T. S. Bathurst, London

Tempera and gold on wood. 30.5 × 24.2 cm.; painted surface 25.5 × 18.5 cm. The panel has a vertical grain, and retains its original thickness of 2.3 cm. The somewhat abraded and scratched surface is not unusual for a painting of this sort.

The picture's iconography is based in part on Saint Bridget of Sweden's vision of Christ's birth, and, in part, on more traditional representations of the Nativity. The mystic's revelations, composed between 1360 and 1370, already influenced depictions of the Nativity in her lifetime (see, for example, Niccolò di Tommaso's paintings of the Nativity at the Vatican and in the John G. Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art). Vecchietta adopts a simplified form, showing the naked Christ Child lying on the bare ground before a cave, divine light emanating from his body. The Virgin, her mantle arranged on the ground, kneels in adoration, surrounded by gold rays while, above, are the heavenly Host and God the

Father, with the dove of the Holy Spirit descending in a ray of light toward the Christ Child. The kneeling shepherd and the figure of Joseph at rest derive from more conventional scenes of the Nativity; in Bridget's revelation, Joseph stands holding a candle, and is about to withdraw.

To judge from the copies of Bridget's writings known to have been in the city in the fifteenth century, the saint enjoyed a certain fame in Siena. A two-volume edition (Biblioteca Comunale, Siena: codices I.V.25–26; see Chelazzi Dini 1982, p. 316) was written in 1399 for the Compagnia dei Disciplinati, a lay confraternity of which Saint Bernardino was a member, located below the Spedale della Scala. Other known copies were in the libraries of San Francesco, Niccolò Borghesi, and Giorgio Tolomei (Zafarana 1980, p. 292).

The *Nativity* is contemporary with Vecchietta's murals for the sacristy of Santa Maria della Scala, painted between 1446 and 1449. In the corresponding fresco (fig. 1), there appears the same cave, the animals in their stable, the shepherd, and a very similarly posed Joseph. However,



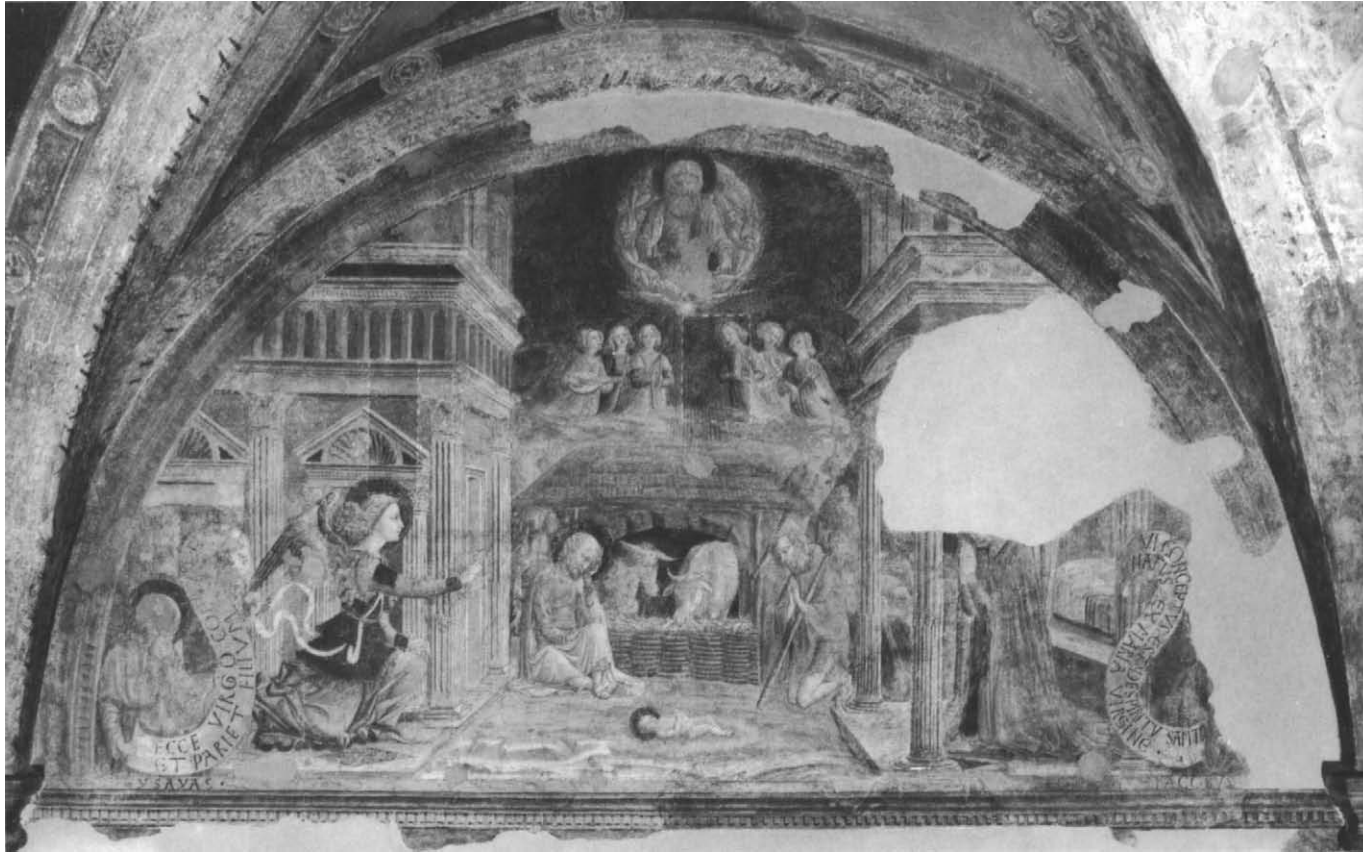


Figure 1. Vecchietta. *The Annunciation and The Nativity*. Reliquary Chapel, Santa Maria della Scala, Siena

the fresco presents a singular iconography, conflating the Annunciation and the Nativity: The Virgin is included only in the Annunciation. As in the panel painting, the fresco incorporates a number of elements of Bridget's vision: the setting, the heavenly Host, and the radiant, naked Child lying on the ground.

The panel's vertical shape, the vertical grain of the wood, and the rather large area originally covered by an engaged frame preclude its provenance from a predella. It is undoubtedly a picture for private devotion whose original owner is not known, but who could well have been a member of the Compagnia dei Disciplinati with a special veneration for Saint Bridget, or a patron like Urbano di Pietro del Bello, rector of the hospital between 1444 and 1450, who commissioned the sacristy frescoes.

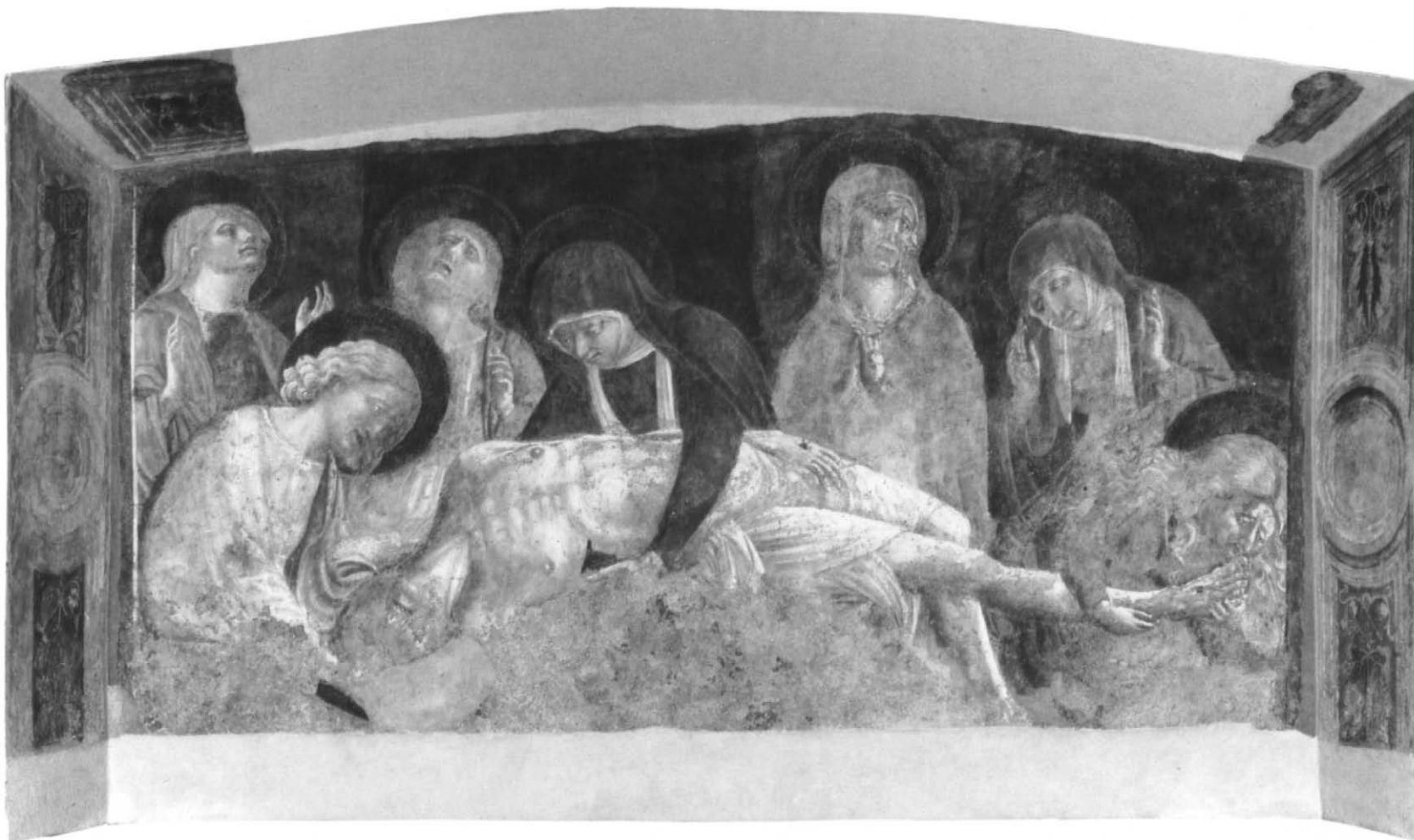
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44. The Lamentation

Museo del Seminario Arcivescovile,
Monteriggioni (Siena)

Detached fresco. 190 × 208 cm. Lusini (1894, pp. 250, 257) described the fresco in the niche of the former burial chapel of the Martinozzi family in San Francesco, Siena, as "tutto guasto e sudicio" [completely ruined and dirty]. In 1910 the fresco was detached (de Nicola 1910, pp. 74–77) and mounted on a shaped canvas, and it was again restored in 1983 (Alessi 1983, pp. 118–20). The lower parts of the figures and the pattern in the upper border are gone.

The Martinozzi Chapel in San Francesco, Siena, where this fresco is from, was destroyed in a disastrous fire in 1655. The chapel space was transformed into a sacristy, and later became a chapel for the local seminary. In Lusini's time, the entrance was from the cloister. When the fresco was detached in 1910, the chapel space was used for coal storage. Originally, however, it had been one of the most important in the church. In 1575, Bossio (f. 672 r) reported that it was dedicated to Saints Anne and Martin, and that there were frescoes, an altarpiece with the Virgin and saints, and intarsia seats along the walls. Fabio



44

Chigi (1625/26, f. 218 v) recorded that the altarpiece was signed *Opus Laurentij Petri*. He also noted that the altarpiece in the chapel of Saint Bernardino in the same church was by Vecchietta. According to a document cited imprecisely by Alessi (1983, p. 120), the Martinozzi Chapel was founded in 1445 by Niccolò d'Agnolo di Giovanni de' Martinozzi. An inscription once in the chapel was transcribed in the eighteenth century: S. NICOLAI DNI ANGEL DE MARTINOZZIS/DE SENIS AN DNI MCCCCXLVIII/ET LUDOVICI EIUS FILII (de Nicola 1910, p. 75, n. 2). The date of the fresco must fall between the supposed founding of the chapel in 1445 and the 1448 inscription. Stylistic evidence confirms this, since the closest analogies are with the frescoes of the ex-reliquary chapel in Santa Maria della Scala dating from 1446 to 1449.

The Martinozzi were a leading Sienese noble family. Their prestige is underscored by Niccolò's success in soliciting the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, who was

in Siena in 1451, to legitimize his natural son, Ludovico (Lusini 1894, p. 126, n. 3). In his second and only surviving will, dated August 23, 1475 (Lusini 1894, p. 126, n. 3), Niccolò stated that in an earlier testament he had arranged to have a chapel erected and endowed, but that since it had subsequently been completed, he would only provide for its endowment.

Considering the original location of the fresco in a sepulchral chapel, there is reason to believe that it decorated a shallow niche with a tomb below. Tombs in recessed niches were common features in Florentine family burial chapels—examples are the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce, the Corsini tomb in Santo Spirito, and the Sassetti and Strozzi chapels in Santa Trinità. In some of these, frescoes decorated the upper part of the complex. A painting with a subject analogous to that of the present fresco, the Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John, was executed by Giovanni Toscani in 1425/26 in the burial

niche of the Ardinghelli Chapel (now deprived of its tomb) in Santa Trinità, Florence. The idea of placing a full-scale *Lamentation* in a family burial chapel may have originated in the early fifteenth century in Burgundy, where the first French sculpture groups of the Burial of Christ were to be found (Forsyth 1970, pp. 21–31). It is, therefore, of interest that a remarkable polychrome sculpture group of the *Pietà* by Vecchietta, in the manner of a Northern European *Vesperbild*, recently rediscovered in the church of San Donato, Siena, and datable to the period of the fresco (Bagnoli 1987, pp. 177–79), repeats the pose of the Virgin and Christ: Christ's body describes an arc on the Virgin's lap, his weight so heavy that she must grasp his torso to prevent him from sliding off, his head and right arm hanging limply. In the fresco, Saint John bends over to support Christ's head and the grief-stricken Magdalene embraces his foot.

In most earlier Italian representations of the Lamentation or Entombment, Christ's head rests on the Virgin's lap and his body lies on the ground. However, a relief of the Lamentation dating from 1395–96 by Hans von Fernach above the portal of the south sacristy in Milan Cathedral anticipates the composition of Vecchietta's fresco. It includes the Virgin and Christ in a *Vesperbild* pose, with John, the Magdalene, and several secondary background figures. Vecchietta undoubtedly saw Fernach's sculpture when he worked in Castiglione Olona in the early 1430s. German *Vesperbild* sculptures, introduced into Italy by the Franciscans, were also well known in Central Italy at this date; there is a particularly high concentration of them in Umbria. Nonetheless, the Fernach relief in Milan and the *Vesperbild* sculptures in Central Italy differ from the Vecchietta sculpture and fresco in that both show Christ's arms folded across his torso. Vecchietta nevertheless may have known a particularly German type of *Vesperbild* in which Christ's right arm falls to the side (see examples in Schiller 1972, 2, fig. 624–626, 628, 630), although such sculptures do not seem to have existed then in Italy (none is cited in Körte's exhaustive 1937 study). However, there are several fourteenth-century Sienese pictorial models, including Giovanni da Milano's *Pietà* of about 1360 in a private collection in Paris, and two paintings, now in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, and The Detroit Institute of Arts, by an anonymous Sienese painter active in the third quarter of the century (see discussions and illustrations in Meiss 1967, pp. 182–86). Vecchietta's positioning of the Virgin's arms

parallels that in the Avignon *Pietà*; if he did not know this or a similar painting, he may have been familiar with one of the early-fifteenth-century French manuscripts that employed the motif.

In contrast to the above-mentioned precedents, Vecchietta dramatizes the image even further by showing Christ's head dropping back. There are several possible intermediaries. One is the polychrome wood sculpture of the Lamentation with Saint John and the Magdalene, formerly in the Cappella del Crocifisso and now on the altar at the entrance to the Piccolomini Library in the cathedral of Siena. The commission was given to the Umbrian Alberto di Betto da Assisi on January 29, 1421 (Milanesi 1854, II, pp. 101–2, no. 68; ill. in Carli 1960, plates 60–61), and the contract implies that the group was to be based on an already existing sculpture. Jacopo della Quercia was designated to oversee the project for the Opera del Duomo, which explains the Quercesque treatment of the modeling. (A later, related sculpture group is in San Domenico: see Kosegarten 1964, fig. 6–8.) In Alberto di Betto's work, Christ's right arm extends all the way back and is held by Saint John. The same pose is used in Andrea del Castagno's 1444 design for a stained-glass window in the cathedral of Florence. Vecchietta takes the gesture one step further in his fresco and in his related sculpture by showing Christ's arm hanging free and his head caught by Saint John before it falls even more.

A textual source for the devotional meaning of the image is found in the popular thirteenth-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. The *Vesperbild* itself derives from the lament of the Virgin commemorated during the Vespers of Good Friday. In the *Meditations* the Virgin is said to support Christ's head and shoulders in her lap, probably accounting for the predominance of that pose in Italian depictions of the Lamentation (Ragusa and Green 1961, p. 342). The Magdalene is described as at his feet, where "she formerly found so much grace." After the Virgin's long expression of grief John asks her if they might shroud the body. The fresco records the Virgin's final lamentation, commemorated at Compline: "She wept uncontrollable tears; she looked at the wounds in His hands and side, now one, now the other; she gazed at His face and head and saw the marks of His thorns, the tearing of His beard, His face filthy with spit and blood, His shorn head; and she could not cease from weeping and looking at Him."

CS

GIOVANNI DI PIETRO

(Nanni di Pietro)

active between 1439 and 1468; died before May 1479

The brother of Vecchietta, Giovanni di Pietro is first documented in 1452 when, with Matteo di Giovanni, he gilded a statue by Jacopo della Quercia that was donated to the cathedral by a certain Mariano di Maestro Piero da Sinalunga. This is the first notice of a partnership between Giovanni and Matteo, his much younger colleague. In Matteo's property-tax return of the following year, in which Giovanni is named as his partner, it is stated that they shared living quarters. Matteo at this point must have been quite young, because he was being supported by an uncle and was said to be "temporeggiando per imparare," or "passing time to learn." In a separate declaration, Giovanni claimed as a dependent an eighteen-year-old daughter, for whom he could not afford a dowry. If she had been born when he was twenty-five (the age then considered legally mature in Siena), his year of birth would have been about 1403. Vecchietta's will of 1479 refers to Giovanni as already deceased.

Giovanni's activity before 1452 is difficult to reconstruct. In 1439, the Spedale della Scala paid a certain Nanni di Pietro a small sum for unspecified work in the "Pellegrinaio di mezzo." In 1454, during the period of his partnership with Matteo, he undertook the decoration of the cathedral's organ shutters, and in 1457 he and Matteo worked together as part of a team of artists decorating the chapel of Saint Bernardino in the cathedral.

In 1463, Giovanni was paid independently for a tabernacle and a predella that were painted for the Compagnia di Sant'Ansano. Parts of this structure may be identified with fragments in Esztergom, Hungary; Merion, Pennsylvania; Florence; and London (these works have been attributed to Giovanni by Everett Fahy in unpublished research). They represent obscure scenes in which the black-and-white flag, or *balzana*, of Siena, Saint Ansanus's attribute, is the central subject. Using these paintings as touchstones, his hand can be identified in several of the pilaster figures and the predella scenes of Matteo di Giovanni's altarpiece in Borgo Sansepolcro. Giovanni served as the assistant on that altarpiece, but his relationship with Matteo probably took the form of a business arrangement, initially set up because of Matteo's youth, and it probably worked both ways. Giovanni had a larger role in the altarpiece reconstructed here (cat. 45), but, in what may be the only surviving documentation, it seems that Matteo collected the payments. Their contracts were fluid, and did not always predicate collaboration on the same projects; during their partnership Matteo certainly worked on commissions of his own. However, although the older of the two artists, Giovanni painted in a style that depends on that of Matteo; Vecchietta was the other major influence on his work.

In 1464, Giovanni di Pietro filed a tax return, lamenting that he was old and alone, but also declaring property given to him by his brother. The last known mention of Giovanni records a late second marriage in 1468.

THE SAN PIETRO OVILE ALTARPIECE (catalogue 45 a, b)

The two panels shown here, the *Marriage of the Virgin* and the *Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents*, together with a third, *The Birth of the Virgin* (22.5 × 44.5 cm.; in the Louvre, Paris), are from the predella of an altarpiece (fig. 1) still *in situ* in the parochial church of San Pietro Ovile, Siena (Strehlke 1985, pp. 8–10); a fourth, the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, is missing. The main panel of the altarpiece is a copy of Simone Martini's *Annunciation* of 1333, then in the cathedral of Siena and now in the Uffizi, Florence. Saints Jerome and Bernardino are shown in the lateral panels, with Saints Peter and Paul and the Crucifixion depicted in the pinnacles.

Close examination of the main panels during a current restoration confirms the observations of Christiansen and Kanter (verbal communication) that the altarpiece was the product of a collaboration between Matteo di Giovanni and Giovanni di Pietro. Previously, it had been attributed to Matteo di Giovanni (first by Romagnoli, about 1835, IV, p. 662), Giovanni di Pietro (tentatively suggested by Pope-Hennessy 1944, pp. 140–43; see Strehlke 1985, pp. 8–10), and Domenico di Bartolo (Brandi 1931). The *Annunciation*, the pinnacle with the *Crucifixion*, and the predella scenes are by one hand; the lateral panels and the pinnacles of half-length saints by another. The figure style of the predella relates to the scattered scenes that probably come from Giovanni di Pietro's predella for the Compagnia di Sant'Ansano, dating to 1463, and the Virgin of the *Annunciation* is clearly by the same artist who painted the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in The Cleveland Museum of Art (see Wixom 1974, p. 73). The remaining portions of the altarpiece represent an important, early phase in Matteo di Giovanni's development predating his altarpiece of 1460 from the Cappella di Sant'Antonio in the Baptistry (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), in which there is also a standing figure of Saint Bernardino. In the Ovile altarpiece, Matteo is still bound to artists like Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio and Vecchietta, whereas in the later work the influence of Donatello, who arrived in Siena in 1457, is apparent. A notable difference between the two hands can be seen in the pinnacles: Matteo di Giovanni's *Saint Peter* and *Saint Paul* sport shadowed halos drawn in perspective and calculated to be seen from below, while, in the *Crucifixion*, Giovanni di Pietro is not capable of such subtleties.

The three extant predella scenes are loosely based on the lost frescoes on the façade of the Spedale della Scala (Péter 1931, esp. pp. 16, 17, 25, 27). These frescoes enjoyed a renewed popularity in the mid-fifteenth century. In 1448, the commune commissioned Sano di Pietro to copy them for the predella of an altarpiece (cat. 18) then

in the Cappella de' Signori of the Palazzo Pubblico. Sano's subjects correspond to the surviving scenes of the Ovile predella, and confirm that the lost panel would have shown the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*.

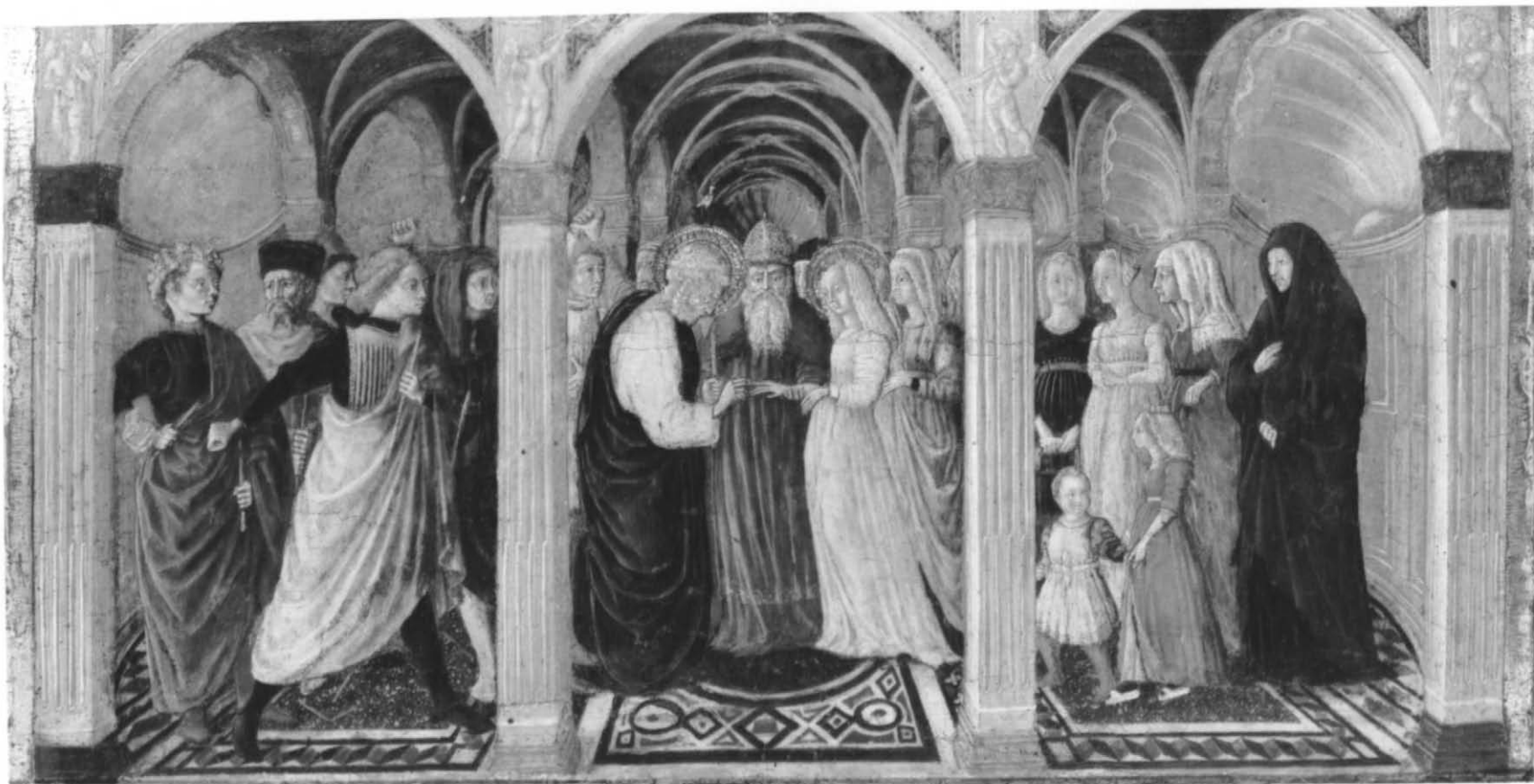
The connection between the San Pietro Ovile altarpiece and the hospital is not only iconographic. Records of payments, published by Bacci (1944, p. 242), indicate that in 1460 the hospital's comptroller, instead of paying the church *decime*, a financial obligation, reimbursed Matteo di Giovanni for work in the church. Since the documents are not traceable, it is unclear what this work was, but it might refer to an altarpiece. However, in light of the style of Matteo's altarpiece dated 1460 (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), that date seems somewhat late for the one in San Pietro Ovile: Considerations of style would suggest a date of at least five years earlier. If the 1460 payments refer to the present altarpiece, it may well be that they are a final accounting for work done sometime before. Bacci's description of the document suggests that the church had trouble raising funds separately, and that they asked the hospital to cover the expense with other money owed the church. All this may have led to a delay in payment.

The hospital's involvement in an altarpiece for San Pietro Ovile is not unusual; it may have been the executor

Giovanni di Pietro



Figure 1. Giovanni di Pietro and Matteo di Giovanni. *The Annunciation, with Saints John the Baptist and Bernardino*. San Pietro Ovile, Siena



of a will of someone who had left funds for a chapel. A similar situation occurred in 1469 when Ambrogio Salimbeni asked the hospital to oversee work on a new chapel and the painting of a crucifix for the same church (Macchi, late 17th/early 18th century, ms. D-110, f. 298 v). The subjects of the predella scenes of the present altarpiece, which repeat those of the fresco cycle on the hospital's façade, visually confirm the hospital's patronage of such a chapel.

Saint Bernardino's involvement in a project that celebrated the art of the fourteenth century in Siena is particularly significant, as he was one of its foremost champions. In his 1427 Lenten sermons, he lauded the virtue of the Virgin's humility by describing her portrayal in Simone's *Annunciation*, and called it an example that Sienese women should emulate (Bernardino 1936 ed., p. 671; Carli 1976, pp. 171–72). He also mentioned the frescoes on the hospital's façade. The saint was a great supporter and admirer of the hospital, which dedicated a chapel to his memory after his canonization in 1450.

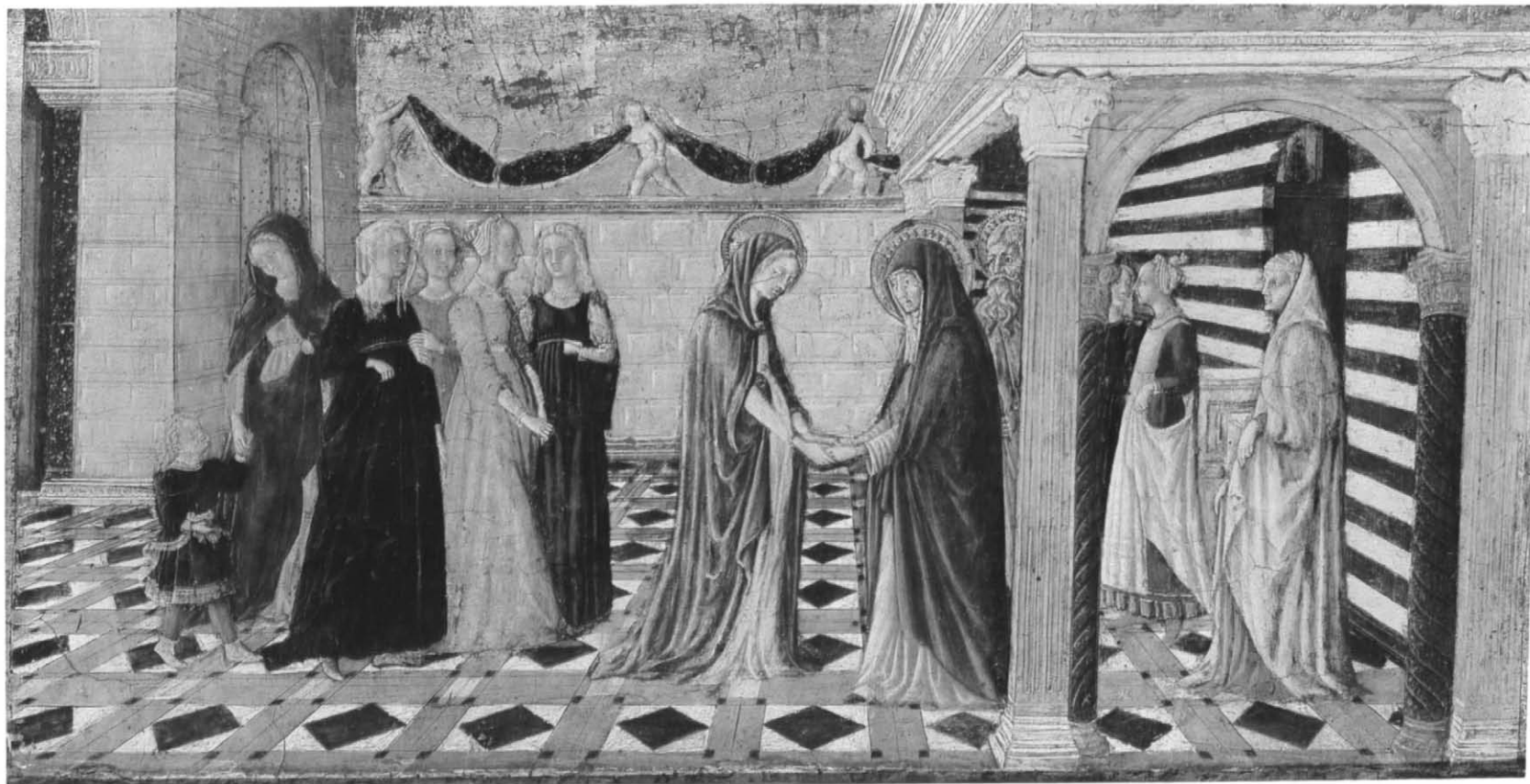
CS

45 a. The Marriage of the Virgin

Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 24 × 46.3 cm.; painted surface 22.6 × 42.3 cm. The panel has been thinned to 1 cm. There is a gold border on all four sides, although, below, it is new, and bears a written attribution to Fra Angelico: *Gio. Fiesoli*. A lipped edge at the top and bottom and inscribed lines on the side mark the limits of the painted surface. The gold border between the scenes would have been about 3.3 cm. wide. There are many losses in the areas of the architecture, which was first laid in with incised lines.

This and the other predella scenes from the San Pietro Ovale altarpiece constitute Giovanni di Pietro's masterpiece: He has adapted Simone Martini's compositions into Brunelleschian architectural settings. Undoubtedly he had some guidance, because the architecture in his other paintings is less sophisticated. The temple in this scene was inspired by one in the fresco by Vecchietta (the artist's brother) in the Pellegrinaio, and might even have been sketched in by Vecchietta himself, or by Matteo di Giovanni. The play of light is carefully ratio-



nalized, and shadows are cast by the piers in the foreground and by some of the figures, such as one of the Virgin's unsatisfied suitors on the left.

CS

45 b. The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents

Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 24 × 46 cm.; painted surface 22.4 × 44 cm. The panel has been thinned to 1.1 cm.

It has the same physical characteristics as *The Marriage of the Virgin* (cat. 45 a); however, the paint surface is in better condition, and losses are minor.

The subject of this scene, identified here as the Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents, is rare in Italian art. Although in the Arena Chapel in Padua there is a corollary scene of the Virgin's return to Nazareth, representations of the subject appear almost exclusively in Siena, and one seems to have been included on the hospital façade (Eisenberg 1981, p. 136). In 1388 Bartolo di Fredi incorporated the episode in an altarpiece for San Francesco

in Montalcino (Freuler 1985), basing the composition on the hospital prototype.

The Johnson panel is more easily mistaken for a Visitation scene because, unlike Bartolo di Fredi's or Sano di Pietro's derivative examples (cat. 18 c), the Virgin extends her arms to her mother alone. The present composition is, in fact, an updated variant, rather than a derivation. The large number of maidens accompanying the Virgin—among whom are some wedding attendants—and the inclusion of an older man who has also come to greet her argue against the subject being the Visitation; in the latter, the action concentrates on the embrace of two women, Mary and Elizabeth (in fact, in Sano di Pietro's version, a haloed older woman to the far left is probably Elizabeth). The Johnson interpretation of the subject is closer to a predella in the Vatican, possibly by Pellegrino di Mariano, based on the same prototypes, in which the Virgin first greets her mother. Earlier Sienese depictions of the Visitation, such as the fresco in San Francesco by a follower of Paolo di Giovanni Fei and Bartolo di Fredi's Malavolti altarpiece of 1397 from San Domenico (now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chambéry), are quite different (Freuler 1987, fig. 5–6).

The subject is recounted by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend* (pp. 523–24). Mary was brought to the temple at the age of three and remained until her fourteenth year, when she refused the high priests' requests that she marry. They would not hear of this, and initiated a contest among the unmarried men of the House of David: Each bachelor had to place a branch on the altar, and the man whose branch flowered would become Mary's husband. The elderly Joseph was the victor, but after the espousals Mary nevertheless returned to the home of her parents accompanied by seven virgins. Soon after, the Angel Gabriel announced to her Christ's birth. Even though in the Johnson panel there are only five maidens and a child in Mary's entourage, the scene must illustrate the story recounted in *The Golden Legend*; in a Visitation there are never so many companions. This makes it clear that all the events in the predella of the San Pietro Oville altarpiece preceded the Annunciation, which is represented in the main panel.

The architecture is, again, of a type inspired by Brunelleschi, which Vecchietta and Domenico di Bartolo introduced into the frescoes in the Pellegrinaio in the early 1440s. The combination of fluted pilasters and spiral columns on the portico of the house recalls Donatello's niche for the Parte Guelfa of Orsanmichele in Florence. The rendering is not as sophisticated as in the preceding panel: The artist had trouble projecting the orthogonals of the pavement according to a two-point perspective system and, as a result, the recession of the diamond insets is haphazard. On the other hand, the play of light on the details of the architecture and on the polychrome putti on the wall is beautifully conceived.

CS

46. The Ascension of Saint Bernardino of Siena

Mr. and Mrs. Nereo Fioratti, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 34.2 × 23 cm.

Inscribed (on the book): QVESV/PSVM/SVIET/SAPIT/
E7MO/NEQ-SV/P•SER/EAME

Two angels carry Saint Bernardino (1380–1444) on a gold cloth. He holds an open book containing an inscription, fraught with calligraphic errors, that comes from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (3:2): "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"; it appears in the earliest representations of the saint, and frequently thereafter. Bernardino commented upon the passage in a number of his sermons (Kaftal 1952, col. 196). On the point of the uplifted finger of the saint's right hand is a

radiating disk with the symbol of the name of Jesus. The cult of the adoration of the name of Jesus, invented and promoted by Bernardino, had received papal sanction in 1427 and 1432, and quickly spread throughout Italy.

Bernardino was canonized in 1450, six years after his death, but prior to that he was the object of increasing popular devotion, and an imagery for representations of him had already been established. Bernardino's pose and the position of his attributes in this picture derive from the earliest dated image of the saint painted by Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio in 1444 for Bernardino's own church, the Osservanza, outside Siena.

Sano di Pietro seems to be responsible for depictions of Bernardino being elevated by two angels, the first dated example of which (Siena Pinacoteca), painted for a certain Fra Leonardo, was signed in 1450. The composition became popular and was not only adapted by Sano di Pietro, Giovanni di Paolo, and Priamo della Quercia for other portraits of the saint, but also by Giovanni di Paolo for images of Saint Catherine (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge) and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (Sant'Agostino, Montepulciano). The present picture does not include the circular-shaped landscape—a schematic map of the Siennese territory—that usually occurs in these representations (conceivably, the picture has been cut at the bottom).

Mode (1973, pp. 59–60, 73) has observed that the Siennese government's celebrations of the saint's canonization may have inspired the prototype by Sano di Pietro and its derivations. On June 14, 1450, in the Piazza del Campo near the spot where Bernardino himself had preached, a mechanism was devised to lift up an effigy of Bernardino in an aureole, assisted by music-making angels, to a recreation of Paradise where God the Father awaited him. The same spectacle was repeated for the festivities attending the canonization of Saint Catherine in 1461. The cloth shown in this picture, absent from Sano's painting, may be a more direct reflection of the ceremony and how the mechanism was made to work; otherwise, it would seem to present an overly skeptical view of how the saint reached heaven. Priamo della Quercia includes the cloth in his version of the event, dated 1450, from San Francesco in Volterra (now in the Pinacoteca e Museo Civico), and it also appears in a small panel by Sano di Pietro, similar in dimensions to the present one, in the Perkins Collection at the Sacro Convento, Assisi, and in another panel also by Sano recently sold in Florence (Sotheby's, Florence, April 4, 1986, no. 55).

The present painting was sold at Christie's, New York (January 9, 1981, no. 83), with an attribution to Sano di Pietro. Ferdinando Bologna (reported in Pavone and Paccelli 1981, p. 37) attributed the picture to the Florentine Giovanni di Ser Giovanni Scheggia. However, there is no reason to deny it a Siennese paternity. Boskovits (1985,



p. 132) has endorsed a tentative attribution to Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio, first advanced by Previtali. However, the picture is most certainly by Giovanni di Pietro—as a comparison of the angels' physiognomy with that of

the figures in the other panels presented here (cat. 45 a, b) suggests. This painting probably dates to shortly after Bernardino's canonization. Its small size indicates that it was for a private patron.

CS

MATTEO DI GIOVANNI

(Matteo di Giovanni di Bartolo)

active by 1452; died 1495

Matteo di Giovanni was probably born in Borgo Sansepolcro, and was first recorded as an artist in 1452, when he was engaged in painting and gilding sculpture in the cathedral of Siena. From 1452 to 1457 he maintained a partnership with the painter Giovanni di Pietro—a collaboration that is still in evidence in the lateral panels, predella, and pilasters from an altarpiece in Borgo Sansepolcro that incorporated in the center Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* (now in the National Gallery, London). Matteo's earliest dated paintings are an altarpiece of 1460 now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, and two altarpieces of 1462–63 in the cathedral of Pienza. These display a stylistic dependence on Domenico di Bartolo and on the last works of Sassetta—the painters in either of whose studios he was probably trained. Beyond this, however, the Pienza altarpieces reveal a precocious awareness of contemporary trends in Florentine painting, and particularly of the anatomical studies of Antonio Pollaiuolo.

Like most of his Sienese contemporaries, Matteo di Giovanni was strongly influenced by Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona during their stays in Siena, but unlike nearly all of his compatriots, his interest in Florentine painting never waned. Accordingly, his style was something of an anomaly in Siena in the Late Quattrocento—except insofar as it affected two later painters of talent: Guidoccio Cozzarelli and Pietro Orioli, both of whom must have apprenticed in his workshop. Although very few historical references to Matteo are known, his career is amply documented by the survival of an unusual number of dated works. The importance and magnificence of many of these indicate the great esteem in which he must have been held during his lifetime, probably eclipsing the reputations of his better-known (to later generations) contemporaries Francesco di Giorgio—for whom painting was an occasional activity—and Neroccio de'Landi. Matteo was a prolific artist, and his surviving oeuvre, which includes numerous private devotional works, primarily of the Madonna and Child, is surpassed only by the output of Sano di Pietro and his shop.

ATTRIBUTED TO MATTEO DI GIOVANNI

47. The Mystical Crucifixion

The Art Museum, Princeton University,
Bequest of Dan Fellows Platt

Tempera and gold on wood. 51.7 × 44 cm.; painted
surface 45.5 × 38 cm. The panel has been thinned and
cradled. The engaged frame is original.

Inscribed (on the scroll): *ego sum patria et via.*; (on
the open book): *in ist/o sunt/tesauri scien[n]tie/et
sapi/entie/dei ab/sconditi*; (on the superscription): *.I.N.R.I.*

The crucified Christ is shown silhouetted against a gold background, his delicately limbed body surrounded by a circle of five half-length figures suspended in midair on

small banks of clouds. Directly behind Christ, Saint Paul, his head turned toward his companion, indicates with his right hand the inscribed scroll issuing from Christ's mouth bearing the message, "I am the Father and the way," while, in his left hand, Paul holds a book open to a commentary that paraphrases Colossians 2:3, "In this one [Christ] are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The remaining figures, their gazes fixed on Christ, can be identified as the four Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Great, who wears the papal tiara; Ambrose, carrying a patriarchal cross; Augustine, on the back of whose cope the resurrected Christ is shown; and Jerome, depicted as a cardinal. Below this mystically assembled group of Early Christian saints is the deserted hill of Golgotha, its fissured surface marked by the hooves



of horses that seem to have entered from the right, stopped in disarray beneath the cross, and then departed at the left. An oversized fly sits menacingly on the skull of Adam, a dried rib and jawbone lie on the path, and, to the left, a colony of ants is busy around its anthill.

The picture has been explained as a commentary on the divine nature of Christ and salvation, as attested by Saint Paul and interpreted by the various Church Fathers—in particular, by Saint Augustine (Rand 1957). The rib is Eve's and signifies original sin, further alluded to by the fly, possibly a *memento mori* (Panofsky 1953, pp. 488–89, n. 5). The ants, by contrast, stand for the prudent Christian who stores up the word of God. It is through the crucified Christ that “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Colossians 2:2) is revealed, and the way to salvation made known.

The authorship of this extraordinary picture, which imposes itself on the imagination not as a dry exposition of theological dogma but rather as an intensely experienced vision, has resisted a convincing resolution. When it was first exhibited in 1917 (Kleinberger Galleries, New York, no. 50) it was attributed to Vecchietta (see also Venturi 1931, pl. CCXXIII; Pope-Hennessy 1939, p. 203, n. 133; Volpe 1963, p. 37; Fredericksen and Zeri 1972, p. 209, with a question mark); since then, it has been ascribed, tentatively, to Giovanni di Paolo (van Marle 1937, XVI, p. 247; Vigni 1937, p. 89) and, with greater plausibility, to Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio (Berenson 1932, p. 458, and 1968, p. 5, with a question mark), and the young Matteo di Giovanni (Pope-Hennessy 1944, p. 143). It is the last attribution alone that merits serious consideration.

There is a parallel for the detailed description of the pearls embroidered on the bishops' miters, the emphatically foreshortened head of Saint Ambrose, the taut skin stretched over a bony physiognomy, the almost surreal attention to details, and the palette of smoldering colors in Matteo di Giovanni's altarpiece in the cathedral of Pienza showing Saints Jerome, Ambrose, Nicholas of Bari, and Augustine grouped around the enthroned Madonna and Child. The *Mystical Crucifixion* would have to be considerably earlier than the Pienza altarpiece, which dates from 1462–63. Indeed, the clear derivation of the figure of Christ from a pinnacle (now in Cleveland) of Sassetta's Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece of 1437–44 makes a date in the early 1450s probable. There is no work by Matteo datable with certainty prior to 1460, but by 1453 he was established as a painter in Siena with Vecchietta's brother, Giovanni di Pietro (Milanesi 1854, II, p. 279). Before his move to Siena, the primary influences on Matteo's style would likely have been Sassetta's altarpiece and a processional banner by Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio (Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris), both of which were installed in Matteo's native Borgo

Sansepolcro in 1444. In any event, the attribution to the young Matteo di Giovanni of the *Mystical Crucifixion* presupposes his familiarity with these works. However, here the exquisite delicacy of Sassetta's altarpiece has acquired a stone-like hardness and precision, and the sometimes caricatural expressiveness of Pietro di Giovanni's banner has attained the almost fanatical intensity that marks the whole of Matteo's subsequent production.

KC

48. Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Catherine of Alexandria and Two Angels

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 66 × 44 cm.

This picture is the most sumptuous and among the best preserved of Matteo di Giovanni's early paintings of the Madonna and Child. It is usually dated to about 1470 (see Shapley 1979, pp. 329–30, with earlier bibliography) and related to a panel, signed and dated 1470, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (no. 286), showing the Madonna and Child Enthroned with Four Angels. However, it exhibits the naturalism and the exuberantly patterned and decorated fabrics and gold ground—in which the ornamental designs are almost obtrusively oversized—characteristic of Matteo's earliest works. Such details as the Child's strong grip on his mother's collar and the coy, wide-eyed expressions of the singing angels—with their open mouths and bared teeth—in addition to the seemingly casual placement of the figures within the composition, suggest that this picture occupies a midway point between the altarpieces from 1462–63 in the cathedral of Pienza and the panel of 1470 in Siena. As such, it would be approximately contemporary with a triptych by Matteo in the Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano, in which the dominant influences of Matteo's youth—Domenico di Bartolo and the late works of Sassetta—although recognizable, have been superseded. A very slightly later panel, also in the National Gallery of Art and, like the present picture, from the Earl of Ashburnham's collection, probably dates closer to 1470, and may be considered as the first in a distinguished series of similar devotional panels from Matteo di Giovanni's maturity.

In the mid-1460s in Siena, Sano di Pietro held a virtually undisputed monopoly on devotional images of the Madonna and Child, generally with saints or occasionally angels surrounding the two principal figures like a decorative garland, set against a tooled gold ground. Sano strongly influenced Francesco di Giorgio, Neroccio, and Benvenuto di Giovanni; the first two of these artists may actually have worked in Sano's enormously productive



studio. Although Matteo di Giovanni owes an obvious debt to Sano di Pietro for his compositional format, Matteo's representations of the Madonna and Child are essentially different in aspiration, seeking to exploit emotional content and pictorial space in a way that is foreign to Sano's nonconfrontational images; they may be indebted as much to Florentine inspiration as to any earlier Sienese examples. Francesco di Giorgio experimented briefly with Matteo's type of Madonna and Child composition after 1470, but not until the death of Sano di Pietro in 1481 and the emergence of Cozzarelli, Pietro Orioli, and Pietro di Domenico as independent masters do Matteo di Giovanni's works of the 1460s and 1470s truly bear fruit.

LK

THE PLACIDI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 49 a–c)

The three panels shown together here form what is perhaps Matteo di Giovanni's most ambitious narrative series, and one of the masterpieces of Sienese painting of the second half of the fifteenth century. The two scenes in Chicago, representing the Flagellation of Saint Jerome and the Appearance of Saints Jerome and John the Baptist to Saint Augustine, were initially associated with a large painting of Saint Augustine in His Study, in the Fogg Art Museum, painted by Matteo in 1482 (Hartlaub 1910, p. 117; Fischkin 1926, pp. 30–32). More recently, it was suggested that, together with the *Crucifixion* in catalogue 49 b, they were part of the putative predella to Matteo's 1482 altarpiece of the Massacre of the Innocents, in Sant'Agostino, Siena (Pope-Hennessy 1960). Although it is no longer possible to accept the association of the *Crucifixion* and the two Chicago panels (cat. 49 a, c) with the Sant'Agostino Massacre of the Innocents, it is certain that they originally were parts of the same predella: The three panels are similar in style, are nearly the same height, and share identical guilloche ornamentation at their left and right sides. The fact that this ornamentation is complete rather than truncated in each panel indicates that additional panels were once set between them. A proposal (Trimpi 1985) to identify these panels with small, full-length figures of Saints Augustine and Vincent Ferrer in niches (in the Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg) is plausible, but not demonstrable.

Whether completed by the Altenburg Saints or not, it has now been determined—almost certainly, correctly—that the three panels belonged to the predella beneath an altarpiece painted by Matteo di Giovanni in 1476 for the Placidi Chapel in San Domenico, Siena (Trimpi 1983). This altarpiece would have comprised the three panels still in the church of San Domenico representing: in the

center, the Madonna and Child enthroned with two kneeling angels holding flaming braziers in the foreground, six angels ranged around and behind the throne, and two other angels holding flaming candelabra and supporting a crown above the Virgin's head; at the left, Saint Jerome kneeling in a rocky landscape adoring a crucifix and accompanied by a lion in the middle distance; and, at the right, Saint John the Baptist kneeling in a rocky landscape. A lunette of *The Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Siena Pinacoteca (Torriti 1977, p. 368), brought there from the church of San Domenico in 1890, is thought to have completed the altarpiece at the top.

The unusual rectangular shape of the San Domenico panels implies that they were originally inserted into an architectural frame, probably with pilaster strips separating the three panels and alleviating somewhat the startling disjunction between their elaborately detailed but discontinuous backgrounds. It is difficult, however, to envision the relationship of the lunette to the main panels, since it is fully 50 cm. narrower than their combined width, exclusive of any framing members. The panels are similar in style and date, but the strongest argument for associating the *Adoration* with the altarpiece painted for the Placidi Chapel is their common provenance. For the chapel of the Artigiani Tedeschi, also in San Domenico, Matteo painted an altarpiece signed and dated 1479 representing Saint Barbara enthroned, accompanied by



Figure 1. Matteo di Giovanni. The Placidi Altarpiece (center panels) San Domenico, Siena; (lunette) Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena



Saints Catherine of Alexandria, Mary Magdalene, and four angels, as well as the lunette above an altarpiece of the Nativity by Francesco di Giorgio, probably dating from about 1490. The full extent of his work for San Domenico is far from certain.

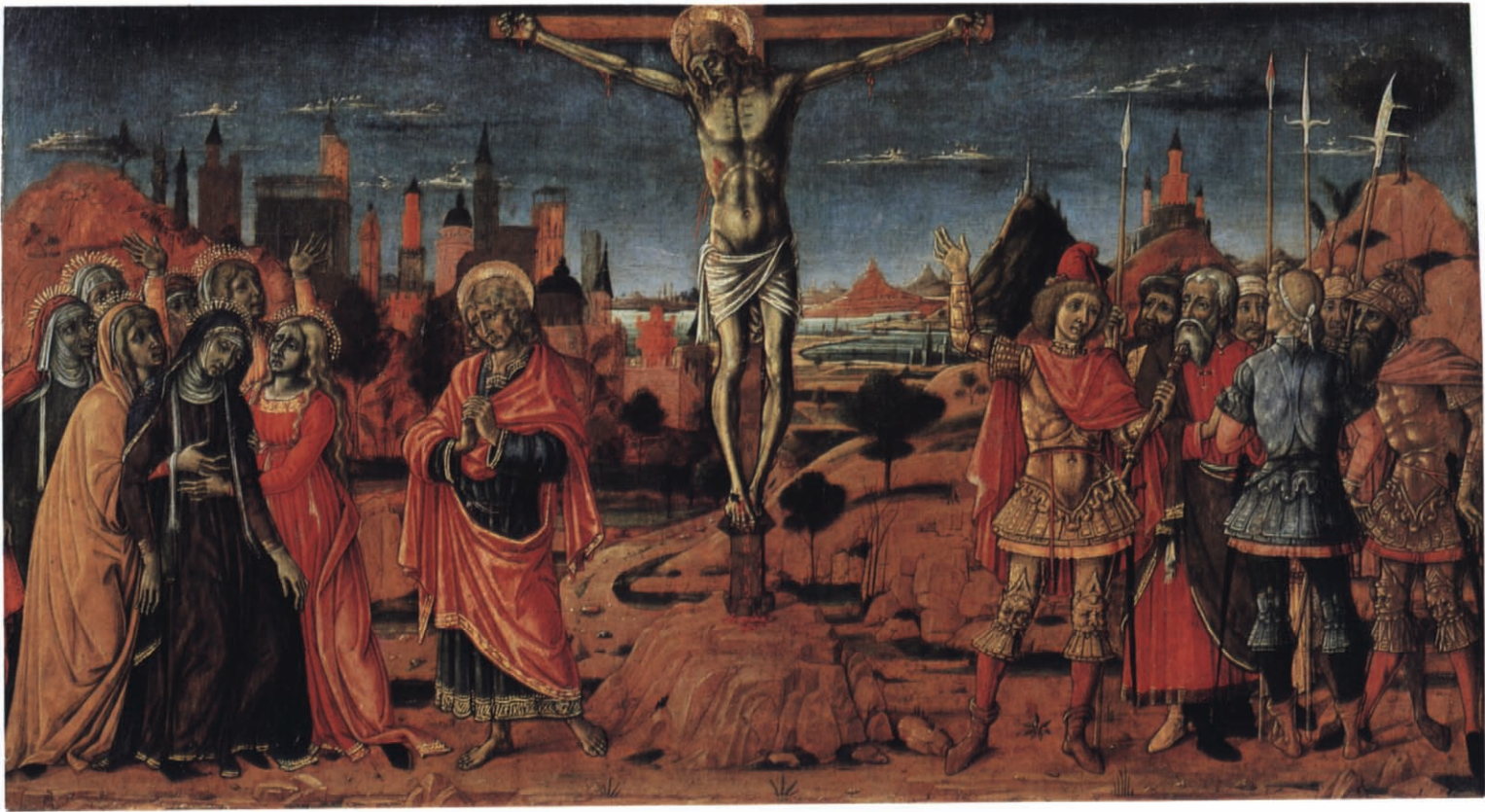
The extraordinary density and refinement of detail in the panels of the Placidi altarpiece, the saturated intensity of Matteo di Giovanni's palette, the strength of the line, and the aggressive treatment of space combine to make it one of his most impressive accomplishments. In arriving at his imagery, the artist had recourse to a variety of sources, both local and foreign, which reveal the depth and range of his culture. The architecture in the *Vision of Saint Augustine*, for example, seems to derive from a book of drawings of fantastic Roman architecture (Scaglia 1970, pp. 17–18), while the genesis of the background of *The Flagellation of Saint Jerome* is probably an idea of Francesco di Giorgio's similar to that employed in the pavement design of the *Massacre of the Innocents* in Siena Cathedral. Reminders of Matteo's earlier interest in Florentine painting—principally, the work of Andrea del Castagno and Antonio Pollaiuolo—are evident throughout the altarpiece, especially in the kneeling figures of Saints Jerome and John the Baptist and in the three-figure group of Saint Jerome and his tormentors. LK

49 a. The Flagellation of Saint Jerome

The Art Institute of Chicago

Tempera and gold on wood. 37.4 × 65.7 cm.; painted surface 35.8 × 64.4 cm. The panel has been thinned to 1.7 cm., and two vertical battens have been dove-tailed into the back. The original edges of the paint surface are masked by modern gesso fills and inpainting. The guilloché ornament engraved on the gold at either side is original, however, and is preserved intact. This ornament is also complete on the other two panels from the predella (cat. 49 b–c), indicating that they were not contiguous in their original setting, but were separated from each other by another painted element.

The scene represents a dream of Saint Jerome, as recorded in his epistle to Eustochium (Migne 1845, XXII, ep. 22, cols. 416–417) and recounted in *The Golden Legend*. Once, while he lay critically ill, the young Jerome dreamt that he was brought before the celestial judge and his court. When asked of what condition he was, Jerome replied “Christian,” upon which the judge accused him rather of being a Ciceronian for having spurned the writings of the Gospels and the Church Fathers (which Jerome had deplored as written in a barbarous style) for the literature of the pagans. He was ordered to be flogged, but at his repeated cries for mercy a member of the court



49 b

interceded on his behalf before the judge. Jerome was pardoned on the understanding that should he again turn to the pagans he shall have denied God, despite the grace of baptism.

In the center of the panel, in an open court before the classical façade of a church, the nearly nude Saint Jerome (distinguished by gold rays) is being flogged by two executioners. His head is thrown back and his hands are raised in a plea for mercy ("miserere mei, Domini, miserere mei. Haec vox inter flagella resonabat"). At the right, two spectators comment to each other on the scene, while at the left, beneath an aedicula adorned with classical reliefs, another spectator intercedes on Jerome's behalf with the judge, who is seated upon a throne with a scepter in his right hand and his left hand raised in a gesture of pardon. Behind Jerome, decorating the portal of a church or baptistery, is a relief depicting the rite of baptism, and visible through the portal is a Sacrament Tabernacle.

Matteo's work from at least 1462/63 betrays an obsessive interest in both Florentine art and in classical decorative motifs, but the architectural setting of this scene goes well beyond anything he had yet attempted. While the form of the tabernacle inside the church or baptistery derives from the bronze ciborium Vecchietta completed

in 1472 for Santa Maria della Scala (now installed on the high altar in the cathedral), the advanced architectural vocabulary presupposes a close familiarity with the work of Francesco di Giorgio, who may also have inspired the figural composition—either through the example of his own design for a Flagellation of Christ, as in the bronze relief now in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia, or through his mediation of Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation* in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in Urbino (see Pope-Hennessy 1986, pp. 162–65).

LK

49 b. The Crucifixion

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 36.5 × 69.6 cm.

The cross, which is set upon a small hillock, fills the center of the painting, extending to the panel's full height. At the left, the fainting Virgin is supported by two holy women; behind her, the Magdalene raises her hands in a gesture of despair as she gazes at the cross, while three more holy women look on. Between this

compact group and the cross stands Saint John the Evangelist, his hands clasped to his chest, looking anxiously at the Virgin. On the right is a crowd of armored soldiers bearing lances. The centurion, distinguished by a Phrygian cap and by a mace that he leans on his hip, addresses a Pharisee to his left as he gestures toward the figure of Christ, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). A deep landscape panorama spreads out behind the figures, with a view of the walled city of Jerusalem rising above the hills at the left. Christ and Saint John the Evangelist are shown with gold halos; the nimbi of the Virgin and the holy women are indicated either by golden rays or stippling.

Matteo also employed a deep landscape view in the main panel of his *Assumption of the Virgin* (in the National Gallery, London), which seems to have been dated 1474 (Pope-Hennessy 1950, p. 82). However, there the impetus was provided in part by Girolamo da Cremona and in part by Pollaiuolo, whose work demonstrably inspired the actively posed figure of Saint Thomas receiving the Virgin's girdle. In the *Crucifixion*, with its brightly colored cityscape and its flat river valley punctuated by conical hills reminiscent of the backgrounds in Mantegna's work, the source is Girolamo da Cremona.

The panel was owned by William Graham (sale, London, April 9, 1886, no. 325: as school of Mantegna; bought in by the Graham family), and is listed by Perkins (Thieme-Becker 1930, XXIV, p. 256). It was first associated with the two scenes in Chicago by Pope-Hennessy (1960, pp. 63–67).

LK

Matteo di Giovanni

49 c. The Vision of Saint Augustine

The Art Institute of Chicago

Tempera and gold on wood. 37.6 × 66.1 cm.; painted surface 36 × 64.4 cm. The original edges of the paint surface have been masked by gesso fills and inpainting. The panel has been thinned to 1.7 cm., and two vertical battens have been attached to the back.

This painting shows Saints Jerome and John the Baptist appearing to Saint Augustine, as recounted in an apocryphal letter to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem popularly ascribed to Saint Augustine (Migne 1845, XXII, ep. 22, cols. 281–289). At the right, Saint Augustine sits behind a desk in his study composing an epistle in honor of Saint Jerome,

49 c



whose death that morning had been miraculously revealed to him. He is interrupted by a vision of Saint Jerome, wearing two crowns, accompanied by Saint John the Baptist, wearing three crowns, and a host of angels. The Baptist explains to Augustine that he and Jerome differ only in that Jerome does not wear the crown of Martyrs, but shares with him the crowns of Virgins and of Doctors. At the left, an Augustinian monk peers through the entrance into the study, shading his eyes from the radiance of the apparition.

To an even greater degree than in the companion scene of the *Flagellation of Saint Jerome* (cat. 49 a), the architectural setting testifies to Matteo's interest in ancient architecture. Scaglia (1970, pp. 17–18) has demonstrated that the three buildings depicted by Matteo derive from a codex with drawings of reconstructions of ancient buildings. Saint Augustine's study—with its series of niches in the basement story, the arched portal surmounted by a segmental tympanum, and the paired columns of the lateral façade—with little variation replicates an unidentified temple in the codex, while the building in the left background repeats features of the so-called Temple of Vespasian and the right-hand structure employs details of the Temple of All Gods. The author of the codex, which is known through a number of copies, cannot be identified with certainty. Scaglia (1970, pp. 18–22) has argued that he was a North Italian from Lombardy or the Veneto, but it is perhaps worth noting that the motif of the eagle surmounting the portal of the domed structure in the left background and the frieze of winged cherubs on the architrave of the right-hand building can be associated with the ducal palace in Urbino. It may be that Matteo became acquainted with the drawings in the codex through Francesco di Giorgio, who might have been employed in Urbino as early as 1475. Alternatively, Matteo may have become familiar with the codex through Vecchietta or another Sienese artist active in Rome in the 1460s, when the drawings seem to have been made (Scaglia 1970, p. 23, n. 28). The *Vision of Saint Augustine* is, however, the earliest picture to show a direct dependence on the codex, a copy of which was later owned by Baldassare Peruzzi.

The picture was first mentioned, together with the *Flagellation of Saint Jerome*, when in the collection of Lord Brownlow at Ashbridge Park (Berenson 1897, p. 154). The two paintings were exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, in 1904 (nos. 38, 43), as by the workshop of Matteo di Giovanni.

LK

THE BANQUET OF HEROD and SAINT BERNARDINO RESTORING A CHILD TO LIFE (catalogue 50 a, b)

These two panels were first recorded together in 1943 by W. R. Valentiner (letter cited in Kettlewell 1981, p. 33, n. 1), who, however, misinterpreted the second scene as a miracle of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, an identification corrected some years later by Gertrude Coor (1961, p. 25). That they originated in a single predella is indicated by their closely comparable dimensions and style, and by the similar treatment of their gilt left and right borders. In both panels these borders are fragmentary, comprising a row of punched circles edging the picture field and traces of the stippled and glazed form of an elaborate candelabrum. Since the fragmentary candelabra do not exactly correspond along the left edge of one panel and the right edge of the other, the two panels originally were not contiguous.

A third panel from the same predella was identified by Federico Zeri (verbal communication) with the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (32 × 38.6 cm.) in the Keresztény Múzeum, Esztergom, catalogued there as by a follower of Matteo di Giovanni. Its inclusion is undoubtedly correct; it has similar decorative borders and the same extension of wood at the top and bottom. The Esztergom *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* belonged to J. A. Ramboux and at the sale of the collection (Heberle 1867, no. 145) it was paired with a *Beheading of Saint Paul* of identical dimensions (no. 146: as from Siena, unidentified in Coor 1959, XXI, pp. 75–96); the whereabouts of the latter panel are today unknown. Pending recovery of this last panel, it would be reasonable to assume that it, too, came from

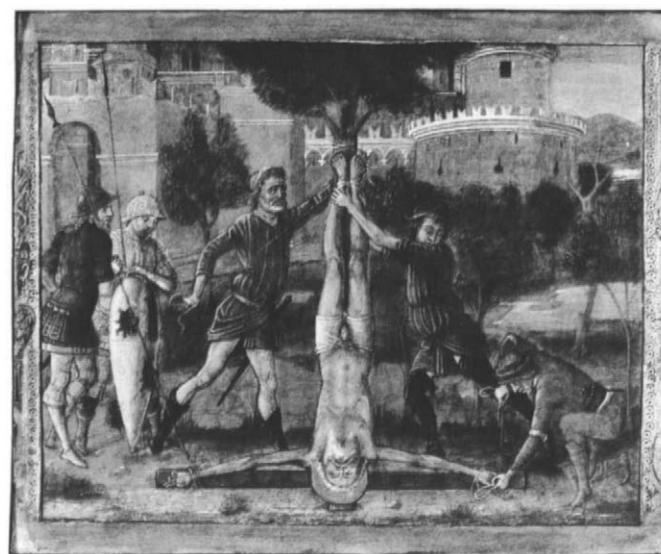


Figure 1. Matteo di Giovanni. *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*. Keresztény Múzeum, Esztergom

the same predella, and that the altarpiece to which it once belonged included figures of Saints John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and Bernardino. Unfortunately, no altarpieces by Matteo di Giovanni with precisely that combination of figures are known.

Closely related in style to the panels in Glens Falls (cat. 50 a), in the Manning Collection (cat. 50 b), and in Esztergom is a *Crucifixion* (31.4 × 71.1 cm.) in the Manchester City Art Gallery, which may have been the central scene of the predella; the figure style employed is virtually identical to that in the panels in Esztergom and in Glens Falls, while the handling of the deep landscape in its center corresponds to that at the left of the scene of the miracle of Saint Bernardino. However, the Manchester *Crucifixion* retains no evidence of a gilt border at the left or right that could demonstrate its association with the Manning or Glens Falls pictures.

The sketchy rendering of the figures in all of these panels, the simplified spatial constructions in relation to Matteo's earlier works, and the generalized treatment of detail in architecture and landscape point to a likely date for the predella in the early 1480s—later than the predella to the Cinughi altarpiece of the Madonna of the Snow (1477) or the *Saint Barbara* predella in the Vatican Pinacoteca (1479), but earlier than the predella in the Museo d'Arte Sacra, Buonconvento, probably of the mid-1480s, which contains scenes from the Life of the Virgin.

LK

50 a. The Banquet of Herod

The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 31.1 × 37.8 cm.; painted surface 28.2 × 35.5 cm. The panel, which has been thinned to 1 cm. and cradled, preserves its original, lipped edge at the top and bottom of the painted surface as well as remnants of the tooled gold vertical borders. The red glaze over the gold of Herod's costume has flaked badly.

Angered by the Baptist's preaching against her incestuous marriage to Herod, King of Judea, Herodias sought the prophet's imprisonment and death. She incited her daughter Salome to seduce the king by dancing, and the king promised Salome, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." Salome replied to the king, "I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist" (Mark 6:23–25).

The scene is divided into thirds by two columns on high plinths placed at the front of the picture plane rising the full height of the composition and by a series of arched windows receding into depth behind. At the left Salome, dressed in white, dances, with ribbons trailing from her

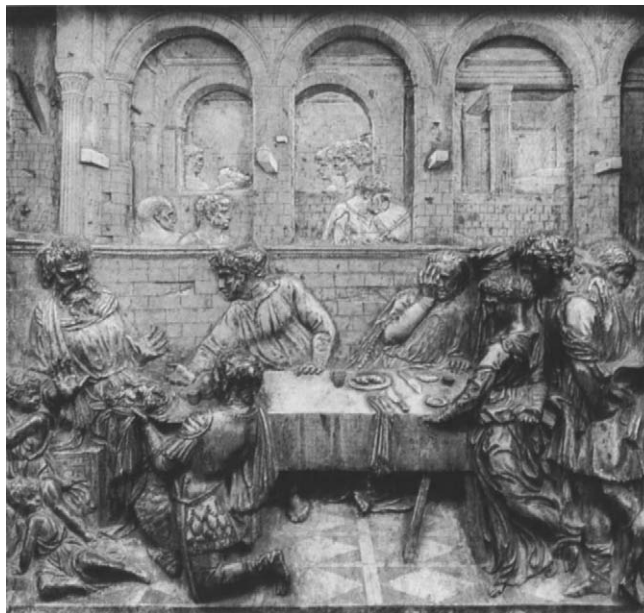


Figure 1. Donatello. *The Banquet of Herod*. Baptistery, Siena

arms, bodice, and waist. At the right Herod, seated at a long table, recoils in dismay at the sight of the Baptist's head on a charger, presented to him by an executioner who kneels in the center of the scene. Herodias, at Herod's right, smiles at her husband, while a courtier looks on from the left.

The composition of this panel consciously evokes Donatello's bronze relief of the same subject on the Siena Baptistery font. Matteo reversed the composition, and adapted and simplified Donatello's elaborate setting, including the table, the inlaid marble floor (the converging orthogonals of which establish the depth of the pictorial space), and the architectural backdrop of arched windows leading onto rows of galleries. He also reduced the number of figures to the minimum necessary to support the narrative, eliminating most of the crowd of onlookers and the procession of soldiers and musicians visible in the galleries in Donatello's relief. An earlier version of the scene by Matteo (probably painted by Giovanni di Pietro after a design by Matteo), incorporated in the predella added to Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* in Borgo Sansepolcro, is more faithful to the impression of activity and confusion imparted by Donatello, retaining a number of the supporting figures and emphasizing a more dramatic treatment of space.

The Sansepolcro predella introduces the device of a line of columns punctuating the composition and dividing the picture field into distinct units. In the Glens Falls panel, these columns are moved to the front of the picture plane, and seem to support the frame rather than any internal architectural structure. They divide the scene into three



50 a



50 b

nearly equal sections, in each of which a principal component of the drama is framed as an isolated vignette: At the left is Salome's dance, in the center the contented Herodias, and at the right Herod recoiling from the Baptist's head. The stately geometry of this arrangement is characteristic of Matteo di Giovanni's later works, distinguishing them from the exuberance and the sometimes unrestrained activity of his earlier compositions.

The reversed direction of the narrative in the Glens Falls panel, in respect both to Donatello's bronze relief and Matteo's earlier Borgo Sansepolcro predella, may imply that the panel originally occupied a position in the left half of the predella (the Sansepolcro *Dance of Salome* is on the far right). The fact that the companion *Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to Life* (cat. 50 b) reads from right to left suggests that it probably filled a corresponding place on the right side of the predella.

LK

50 b. Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to Life

Suida-Manning Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 30.2 × 38.2 cm.; painted surface 28 × 35.8 cm. The panel, which has been thinned to 1 cm. and cradled, preserves its original, lipped edge at the top and bottom of the painted surface as well as remnants of the tooled gold vertical borders that separated it from its companion scenes in a predella.

This representation of a posthumous miracle of Saint Bernardino (d. 1444) had earlier been portrayed by Sano di Pietro (cat. 20; see also cat. 24 a). A ten-year-old boy, Carino of Aquila, drowned upon falling into a millpond, but was resuscitated by the miraculous intervention of Saint Bernardino (AA.SS. Maii, v, p. 143, no. 25). In Sano di Pietro's painting of this subject, attention is focused on the recovery of the child and the prayers of the faithful, with the scene of Carino's body retrieved from the water relegated to a corner in the background, more as an emblematic identification of the miracle than as an essential part of the narrative. Matteo di Giovanni, on the other hand, made the discovery of the boy's body and the mother's hysterical grief his principle subject. The millpond is a torrent coursing through a culvert under the mill (identified as such by the sacks of flour visible through the open doorway) at the right. A man wading in the river lifts up Carino—facedown in the rushing water—by one of the boy's lifeless arms. Carino's grief-stricken mother hurries out of the mill, while his father, visible through a window in the mill, prays to Saint Bernardino. The saint appears in half-length in the sky at the upper left, emerging from an aureole of gold and

blessing the scene below. The miller's ass, laden with sacks of grain, walks calmly along a path toward the left, while a deep river landscape opens out in the background.

A later version (1498) of this subject by Andrea di Niccolò (Collegiata, Casole d'Elsa) combines elements borrowed from both Matteo's and Sano's prototypes, retaining Matteo's realistic portrayal of the mill and the ass, the retrieval of Carino's body, and the anguish of the mother, and adding the thankful prayers of the recovered Carino and his parents, as derived from Sano di Pietro's version.

The surface of this engaging picture is well preserved, but the thinly applied medium has become partly transparent, revealing extensive preparatory underdrawing, especially beneath the figure of the bereaved woman in the center. The forceful contours and strong, confident hatching of this drawing unmistakably indicate Matteo di Giovanni's authorship of the panel, rather than that of Guidoccio Cozzarelli, to whom it has sometimes been attributed.

LK



50 b: infrared detail

GUIDOCCIO COZZARELLI

(Guidoccio di Giovanni Cozzarelli)

(1450–1516/17)

The historical and artistic personality of Guidoccio Cozzarelli has never been adequately characterized: Documents referring to him are unclear, and his dated works fall mostly within the short, four-year period between 1482 and 1486. Formerly identified with a “Cozzarello” mentioned along with Sano di Pietro in 1450 in a document concerning work in the cathedral of Siena, Cozzarelli is now known to have been born that year (Bacci 1939 b, pp. 212–19). He would have been trained in the studio of Matteo di Giovanni about 1470, and his earliest dated paintings, a series of miniatures, of 1480–82, for the choir books of the cathedral of Siena, and a *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saint Jerome and the Blessed Colombini* (Siena Pinacoteca), of 1482, are closely dependent on Matteo di Giovanni’s style of the late 1470s. Works by the two artists have frequently been, and continue to be, confused—notwithstanding various specialized studies aimed exclusively at distinguishing between them (see especially, Berenson 1918, pp. 81–96). Traditionally, Cozzarelli has been treated slightly as an uninspired imitator of Matteo di Giovanni—a contention belied by his two altarpieces of about 1483 and 1486, both in the church of San Bernardino in Sinalunga, and by his mutilated polyptych in Rosia. As a result, many of Matteo’s late works, in which the nervous draftsmanship and bright palette of his earlier pictures are relaxed, have often been assigned to Cozzarelli, while some of Cozzarelli’s best paintings are still taken for Matteo’s.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century, Cozzarelli’s style shifted decisively under the influence of his younger fellow pupil in Matteo di Giovanni’s shop, Pietro Orioli—again to the point that works by the two painters have been, and continue to be, confused (see Russell 1973, with earlier bibliography). Cozzarelli’s last dated work, a full-length *Saint Sebastian* of 1495 in the Siena Pinacoteca, is clearly related to a group of devotional panels of the *Madonna and Child*, many of which still bear attributions to Giacomo Pacchiarotto (that is, Pietro Orioli), but which are, in reality, by Cozzarelli. The recent identification and redating of Orioli’s paintings offers new insight into the complexity of Cozzarelli’s development that has not yet been explored.

51. The Legend of Cloelia

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera, gold, and silver on wood. 45 × 115.5 cm.;
painted surface 38.4 × 109.8 cm. The panel, which has
a horizontal grain, has not been thinned. The original,
lipped edge of the paint surface is intact on all sides.

The panel, originally the front of a cassone (marriage chest), represents the story of the Roman maiden Cloelia as recounted by Plutarch (*Life of Publicola*, XIX). The Roman consul Publicola, as a pledge of peace with the

Etruscan king Lars Porsena, sent ten young men and ten virgins from the best families in Rome—among them Cloelia and his own daughter Valeria—as hostages, to the Etruscan army encamped on the far side of the Tiber. Unguarded while they bathed, Cloelia and her companions swam the Tiber (Cloelia is usually shown crossing the river on horseback while the other virgins swim—as in the painted cassone panel in the Louvre by Liberale da Verona) and escaped back to Rome. Publicola, chagrined at this apparent breach of faith with Lars Porsena, had them returned to the Etruscan king, who magnani-



51

mously rewarded Cloelia for her bravery. In Cozzarelli's panel, three virgins are shown in the center, swimming in the Tiber. A maiden on the bank at the left tests the water timidly with her foot while two others have reached the bank at the right; one of them, Cloelia, is about to enter the gate leading to Rome. At the left, in front of the tents of the Etruscan army, Publicola returns the young girls to Lars Porsena, who asks which of them "was she that proposed the design, and set the example." Cloelia kneels humbly before the consul and the king.

For most of its known history, the *Legend of Cloelia* was attributed to Matteo di Giovanni and was considered part of a series comprising two other cassone panels with scenes from the story of Camilla (John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art; formerly W. H. Woodward collection: sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, November 15, 1945, no. 25). Prior to 1911, the three panels were in the collection of Charles Butler at Warrenwood, Hatfield, together with two smaller panels then attributed to Antonio Pollaiuolo showing figures of Hercules supporting armorial shields, one with the arms of the Chigi and the other with the arms of the Bellanti (see van Os ed. 1974, pp. 100–101). The two Camilla panels and the two Hercules panels are closely related in style and are characteristic late works by Matteo di Giovanni, possibly produced on the occasion of the marriage of Eufrosia di Mariano Chigi and Andrea di Bartolo Bellanti in 1488. Despite its common provenance, the *Legend of Cloelia* is not likely to have originated with these and is certainly by a different artist: Guidoccio Cozzarelli. Its close dependence on Matteo places it early in Cozzarelli's

career (Zeri and Gardner, 1980, p. 9), probably about 1480. The relatively coarse draftsmanship, only in part explicable by the panel's intended function as a piece of furniture, compares with Cozzarelli's *Madonna and Child* of 1482 in the Siena Pinacoteca, while such figures as that of Cloelia passing through the city gate at the right of the panel suggest the lingering influence of Liberale da Verona, who left Siena in 1476. If the banners flying from atop two of the Etruscan tents at the left are meant as armorial devices and are not merely generic decorative details, it may be possible to identify the panel as part of a commission from the Sberghieri family of Siena, although no independent documentary evidence to that effect is known.

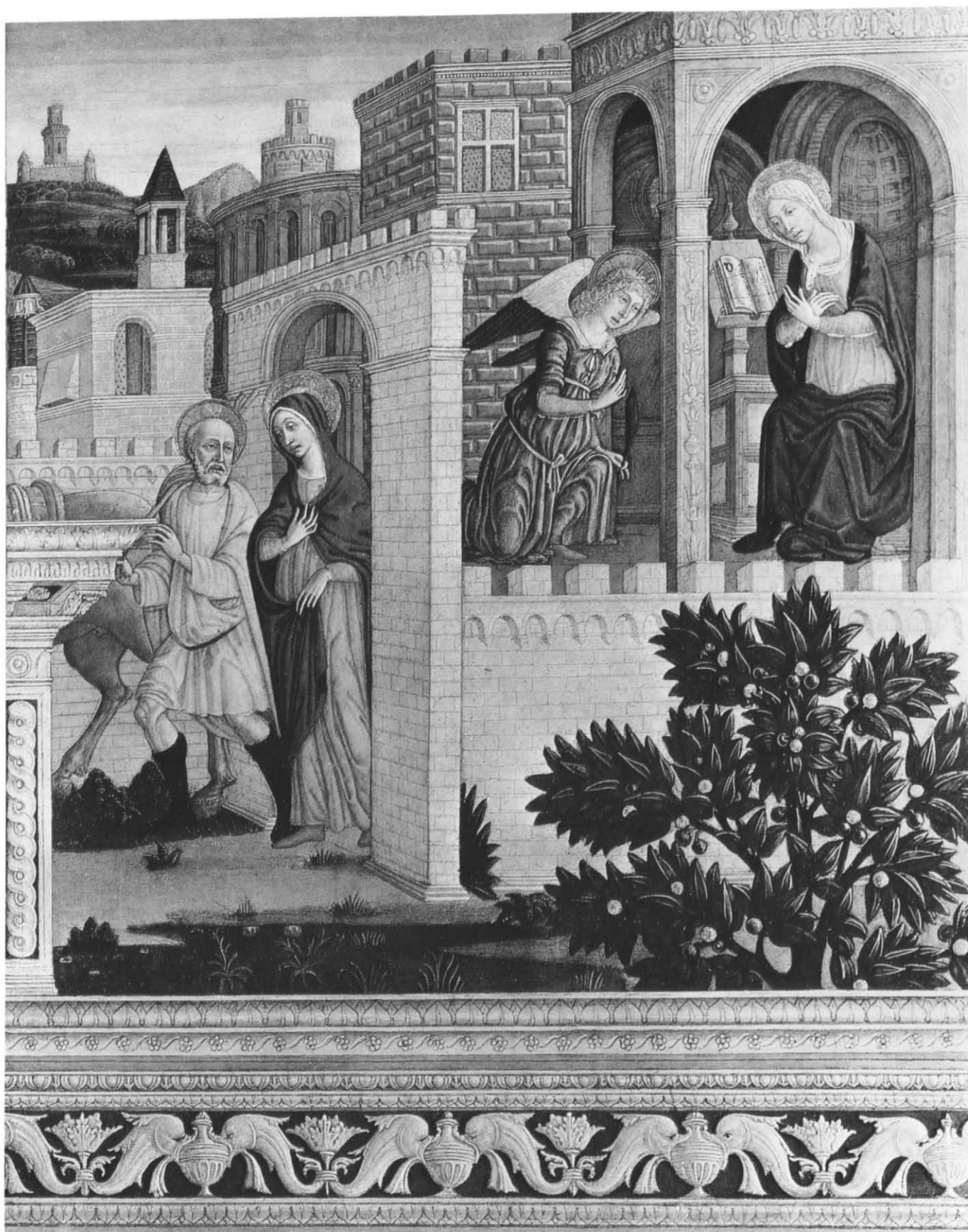
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52. The Annunciation and The Journey to Bethlehem

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables,
Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

Tempera on wood. 69.2 × 55 cm.; painted surface 68 × 54 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, has been thinned to 1 cm. and cradled.

At the upper right of the panel, framed by an open arch leading into her vaulted chamber, the Virgin turns away from the book on her lectern to receive the angelic salutation. The Angel Gabriel kneels outside her room, a palm branch in his left hand; a city street in receding perspective opens out behind him. At the left, the Virgin



and Saint Joseph leave through a gate in the city walls. They are accompanied by an ass, largely obscured by an elaborate pilaster and cornice cropped by the left edge of the panel. At the bottom right, the top of a fruit tree protrudes above a detailed classical entablature with a continuous frieze of dolphins, urns, and acanthus leaves.

The subjects of the two narrative episodes portrayed here have been variously interpreted. Since the Angel Gabriel holds a palm branch rather than a spray of lilies, it has been thought that he announces the death of the Virgin. However, not only does the palm branch recur in several Sienese depictions of the annunciation of the birth of Christ, but the annunciation of the death of the Virgin would be wholly inappropriate as an antecedent to the second scene. The latter is usually considered to represent the Flight into Egypt, but the conspicuous absence of the Christ Child (compare Matteo di Giovanni's *Flight into Egypt*, formerly in the collection of H. L. Larsen, which, together with the *Crucifixion* and the *Magi before Herod* in San Francisco, completed the predella of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, of 1491, in Santa Maria dei Servi, Siena), suggests instead the Journey to Bethlehem—a subject rarely portrayed in Italian painting. Its presence here, in conjunction with the Annunciation, implies an extensive narrative that included a representation of the Nativity and perhaps further episodes either from the Infancy of Christ or the Life of the Virgin.

The original format of this narrative cycle is not clear. Certainly the panel cannot have formed part of a predella, for the wood grain is vertical. The outsized architectural elements, cropped at the bottom and the left side, and the fragmentary tree in the foreground would indicate that the panel was excised from the upper corner of an altarpiece. It has been proposed (Shapley 1966, p. 159) that the cornice and pilaster are parts of a now-missing throne for the Virgin. If this is so, and an enthroned Madonna and Child was the principal subject of the altarpiece, a panel of *The Birth of the Virgin*, formerly in the collection of Baron Lazzaroni in Rome (van Marle 1931, p. 174, pl. 17) and exhibited in Milan as a work by Matteo di Giovanni (Galleria Gilberto Algranti, May 5–30, 1971) could, conceivably, have belonged to the same complex. The Lazzaroni panel measures 67 × 58 cm.; it has been associated by Miklòs Boskovits (exhib. cat., Galleria Algranti) with the *Flight into Egypt*.

It is, however, more likely that the altarpiece had as its principal subject the Nativity. A photograph of the panel taken by Langton Douglas before it was acquired for the Kress Collection shows that the lower edge of the classical entablature originally appeared as a ruin, all traces of which have since been painted out by a restorer. The birth of the Christ Child in a ruined classical temple, symbolizing the eclipse of the old dispensation by the new, is a common motif in Renaissance painting: Con-

temporary examples in Siena include Francesco di Giorgio's late altarpiece of the Nativity in the church of San Domenico and Pietro di Domenico's two versions of the theme in the Siena Pinacoteca. Cozzarelli himself included a ruined classical façade in a small *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Berenson 1968, fig. 829: as homeless), which provides a convincing analogy for the probable position of the cropped moldings in the present panel. An analogy for the disparity in scale between foreground and background scenes, which such a reconstruction implies, is provided by Cozzarelli's *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece in Stockholm (Sirén 1933, pl. 46), where, following the example of Bartolo di Fredi, scenes of the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem fill the upper third of the composition. It is tempting to identify a much-damaged panel in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, representing a cavalcade (or procession of the Magi?), as another fragment from the same altarpiece as the Coral Gables panel. The two are compatible in style and scale, but the direction of the wood grain differs, and the placement of the panels within a single altarpiece is difficult to envision.

The Coral Gables *Annunciation and Journey to Bethlehem* has been variously regarded as a late painting by Guidoccio Cozzarelli (Pope-Hennessy 1947, p. 30), and related to the miniatures that he painted in 1480–82 for the choir books of the cathedral (Shapley 1966, p. 159). It is difficult to be precise in dating Cozzarelli's works, but the figure style and the accomplished projection of space in this fragment most strongly recall a *biccherna* cover of 1484 showing the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple and an altarpiece of 1486, in the church of San Bernardino in Sinalunga, representing the Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Simon and Thaddeus. A date in the mid-1480s for the present panel is likely. It should be noted that the *biccherna* covers dating from 1487, 1488, and 1489, generally attributed to Cozzarelli (see Borgia et al. 1984, pp. 190–95), do not provide an acceptable standard of comparison, since they were painted not by Cozzarelli but by Matteo di Giovanni.

LK

GIROLAMO DA CREMONA

(Girolamo di Giovanni dei Corradi)

active between 1451 and 1483

Girolamo da Cremona was one of the outstanding miniaturists of the fifteenth century, and a key figure in the history of Sienese painting. Active by 1451, the date that appears on a miniature in the Musée Marmottan, Paris (Levi d'Ancona 1964, pp. 48–49), he seems to have been employed in Ferrara illuminating the richly decorated bible for Borso d'Este between 1455 and 1461 (Righetti 1974, pp. 33–35). The major influence on his early style was that of Jacopo Bellini, who had worked for Borso's brother, Leonello d'Este, and whose discursive approach to narrative painting and interest in perspective were the bases for Girolamo's miniatures. In 1461, Girolamo moved to Mantua where, on the recommendation of Mantegna, he completed a Missal for the Marchesa Barbara of Brandenburg. His close contact with Mantegna was crucial to his development and to the brilliantly descriptive style he brought to Siena, where he was first mentioned in 1470 (not, as usually stated, 1468: see Bisogni 1973, p. 402; Eberhardt 1985, p. 422).

In Siena, where he was intermittently active until 1474, Girolamo illuminated choir books for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (these are now in Chiusi) and for the cathedral, working alongside Liberale da Verona and sometimes in collaboration with two other North Italian miniaturists, Giovanni da Udine and Venturino Mercati. His influence on Liberale, who was considerably younger, was enormous; even today, after years of debate, it is not always easy to distinguish between the works of the two artists, although careful analysis of the surviving documents has resolved much of the confusion (Eberhardt 1983). In most respects their styles were antithetical. The miniatures known with certainty to be by Girolamo exhibit a refined technique, a meticulous attention to detail, and a placid approach to narration at odds with the more cursory, impulsive, and highly expressive mode of Liberale. It was Girolamo's illusionistic, pearl-encrusted letters and border decorations that established a new norm in Sienese book decoration, while the tautly drawn, brightly colored, faceted surfaces of his paintings influenced local artists such as Benvenuto di Giovanni long after his departure from Siena in 1474.

Girolamo seems only occasionally to have painted on a large scale, for which his miniaturist style was ill suited. An *Annunciation* in the Siena Pinacoteca, a disappointing and lackluster work, is the only altarpiece that can be attributed to him with confidence (the altarpiece dated 1472 in the cathedral of Viterbo, and that in San Francesca Romana, Rome, are by Liberale da Verona).

In 1475–76, Girolamo was documented in Venice, working on a Missal for Lucrezia de' Medici (see cat. 54 a–c, 55). The last miniatures attributable to him are the two splendid frontispieces to an edition of Aristotle printed in Venice in 1483 and now in the Pierpont Morgan Library.



53. The Initial *O* (or *D*), with God the Father Enthroned (cutting from a Psalter)

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

Tempera and gold on vellum. 23.9 × 19.4 cm.

This majestic miniature of God the Father seated in a rainbow-colored mandorla that echoes the shape of the enframing letter has, curiously enough, been ignored in the literature, although it is unquestionably by Girolamo

da Cremona and is contemporary with his work on the cathedral choir books. It was purchased in Paris by Robert Lehman in 1953, and tentatively attributed to Girolamo by Seymour (1970, p. 215), who dated it 1465–70. The closest analogy of style is with Girolamo's illuminations in a Gradual for the cathedral (codex 23.8; see fig. 1), for which he was paid in 1473 (see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 109–16, for the documents). That Gradual employs the same type of initial, conceived like a three-dimensional frame that both contains and overlaps the image it surrounds.



Figure 1. Girolamo da Cremona. *The Resurrection* (codex 23.8, f. 2). Cathedral, Siena

The combination of vegetal and sculpted forms echoes—via Mantegna—classical decorative motifs. The cherubim and seraphim within the letter derive from such works by Mantegna as his early *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Metropolitan Museum, which Girolamo would probably have studied in Ferrara (Pacchioni 1915, pp. 350–52; Christiansen 1983, pp. 32–36).

It was miniatures like this one—with its delicately modeled but precisely delineated forms, seemingly chiseled from semiprecious stones—that deeply influenced not only Liberale da Verona, but native Sienese painters such as Benvenuto di Giovanni and Francesco di Giorgio, inspiring them to adopt a more descriptive and recognizably Renaissance style.

The fragmentary passage on the reverse of the sheet is insufficient to identify the text illustrated, although Psalm 92 (93), recited on Sundays after the octave of Epiphany until Septuagesima, would be appropriate.

KC

54 a. A Priest Celebrating Mass (cutting from a Missal)

Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis Collection, 27:29

Tempera and gold on vellum. 6.5 × 6.2 cm.

The miniature illustrates the instructions for consecrating the Host, during which the priest “kneels down, rises, takes up the Sacred Host, and says ‘I will take the Bread of heaven and call upon the name of the Lord’” (Roman Missal). On the reverse of the sheet is part of the priestly instructions immediately following the consecration (“hic accipiens hostia et teneat eam . . .”).

KC



54 b. A Roundel with Deer (cutting from a Missal)

Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis Collection, 27:28

Tempera and gold on vellum. 5 × 8.6 cm.





**54 c. Border Decoration with Deer
(cutting from a Missal)**

Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia,
Lewis Collection, 27:27

Tempera and gold on vellum. 6.6 × 17.3 cm.

These three cuttings from the border decorations of a Missal were first published by Levi d'Ancona (1964, pp. 70–71, and 1970, pp. 61, 68), who suggested that they may have been excised from a Missal that Girolamo decorated in Venice for Lucrezia de' Medici in 1475–76. They are similar in style to Girolamo's brilliant illuminations of 1473 in a Gradual for the cathedral of Siena (codex 23.8, ff. 2 r, 132 r; see fig. 1, p. 288), and the association with Lucrezia de' Medici's Missal is plausible. The remarkably inventive borders, with their profusion of pearls and gilt ornament punctuated by roundels with deer grazing in a landscape, were imitated in Siena by Liberale da Verona and various Sienese artists (see, for example, f. 3 r in codex 6.F, painted by Cozzarelli for the cathedral). None, however, was able to match Girolamo's wonderfully mimetic effects, his sensitivity to light, or his ability to transcribe even the smallest, incidental details, so that in a scene like the one showing a priest before an altar, the effect is of an event that has been observed rather than imagined.

KC

**55. The Descent from the Cross
(cutting from a Missal or choir book)**

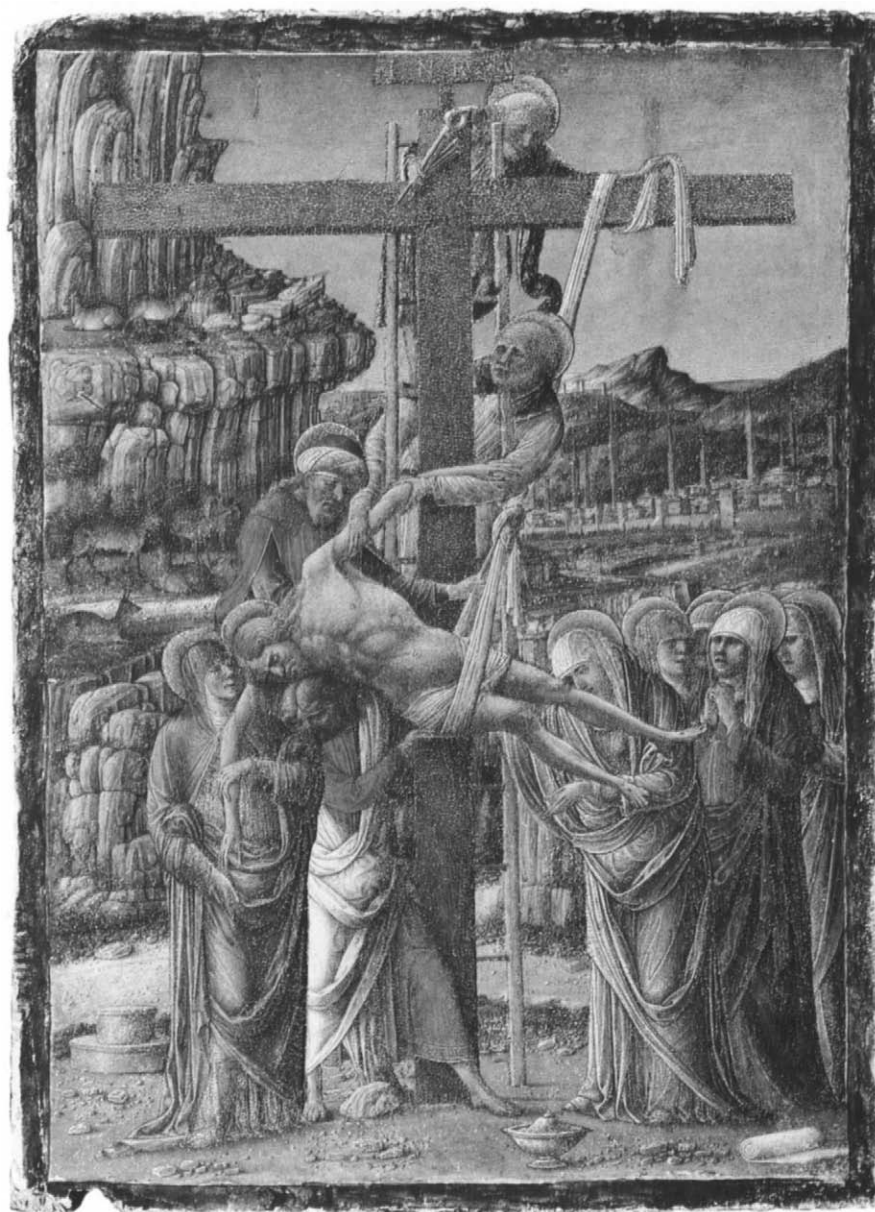
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on vellum, affixed to a cradled panel.

15.9 × 11.5 cm.

The miniature, which belonged to the Marquis de Talleyrand (*Catalogue of Paintings in the Bache Collection* 1943, p. 8), depicts Christ being lowered from the cross into the arms of the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist. The Magdalene and four holy women stand at Christ's feet weeping. Nicodemus, wearing a turban, is seen on a ladder; one of the other assisting men is Joseph of Arimathea. The miniature is mentioned as the work of Girolamo da Cremona by Levi d'Ancona (1970, p. 70). Although somewhat damaged, its great beauty and refinement are evident. The hard, faceted surfaces of Girolamo's earlier style have become more pliant and luminous. Especially remarkable is the naturalistic treatment of the dead Christ, his head hanging heavily to one side and his legs stiffly extended, and the obvious effort of Saint John to support this weight on his shoulders. The delicately rendered drapery, the crystal-like pebbles strewn on the ground, and the attention lavished on such still-life elements as the ointment jar and the winding-sheet in the foreground are typical of Girolamo's mature style.

The closest analogies are with the breviary that he illuminated about 1474–75 for the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence (now in the Bargello: codex 68) and, to an even greater degree, with the three fragments in the Lewis Collection (cat. 54 a–c). There is a possibility that the *Descent from the Cross* was excised from the same book, and that this was the Missal decorated by Girolamo in 1475–76 for Lucrezia de' Medici (see Levi



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d'Ancona 1964, pp. 70–71, 92–93, for the correspondence relating to the commission). At the time, Girolamo was in Venice, and the commission was handled through Lucrezia's agent, Benedetto Cepperello, who gives a vivid report of Girolamo's surprisingly arrogant behavior. Levi d'Ancona (1970, pp. 61, 68) has tentatively associated

two further cuttings (Wildenstein Collection, Musée Marmottan, Paris) with this Missal.

A background very like this one, with its diaphanous blue mountains and spired city, was the basis of Benvenuto di Giovanni's landscape style.

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LIBERALE DA VERONA

(Liberale di Jacomo)

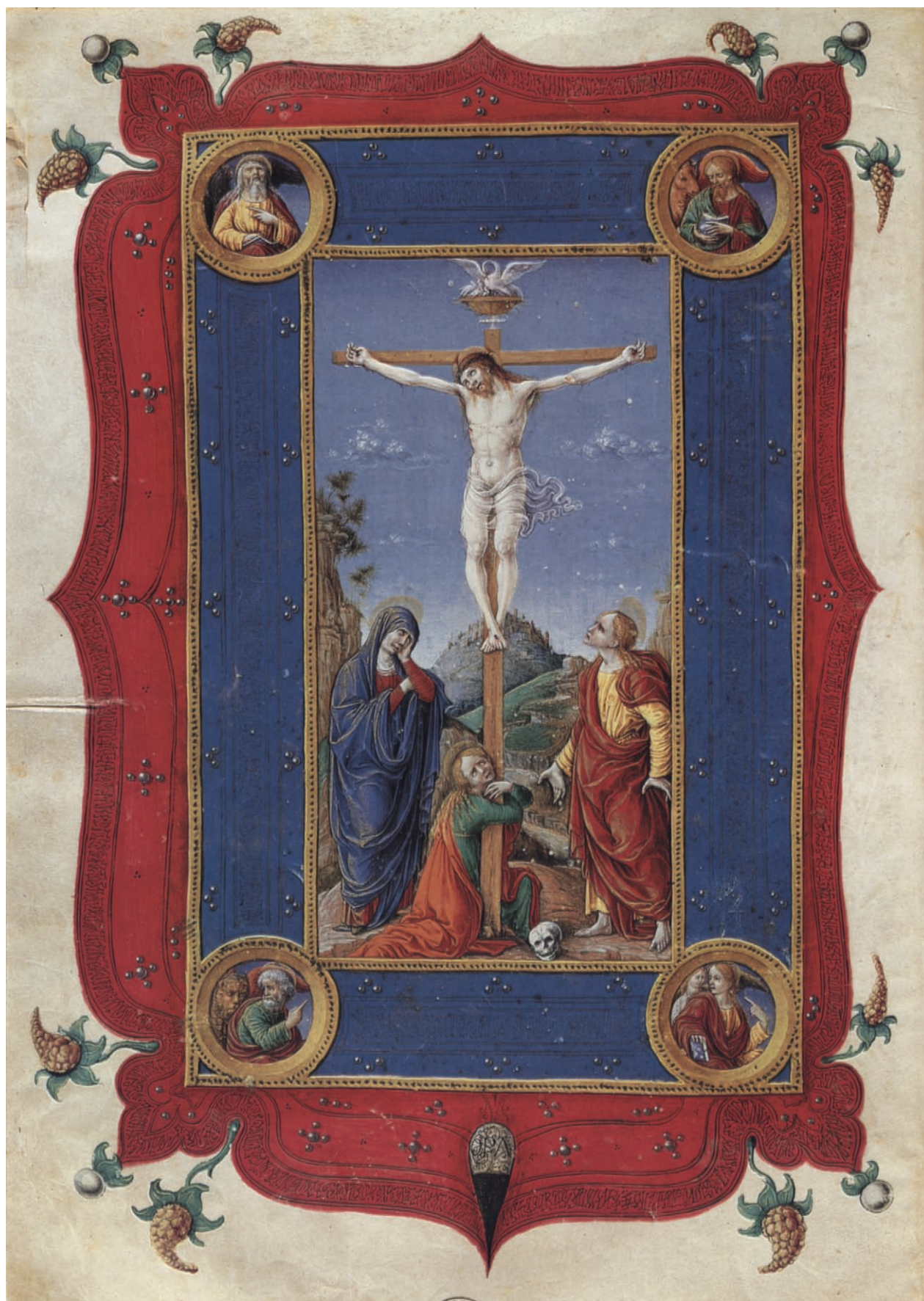
1445–1527/29

An artist of sometimes astonishing originality, Liberale was one of the key figures in Siena in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. His training is not documented, but it is likely that he was at least familiar with the work of the Ferrarese miniaturist Taddeo Crivelli, whose love of brilliant colors, extravagant border decorations populated by both fantastical and naturalistic creatures, and by figures in active poses, was shared by Liberale. In 1465 he witnessed a document in the Olivetan monastery of Santa Maria in Organo, Verona, and not long thereafter, when barely twenty years old, he was brought to Siena to illuminate choir books for the Olivetan order. It was through them that, in 1467, he was hired to work on a lavish set of choir books for the cathedral of Siena—a task to which he devoted the better part of the next nine years (see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 51–52, 229 doc. 21).

The decade Liberale spent in Siena was crucial to his career and of great importance for the history of Sienese painting. His earliest miniatures for the cathedral are in a Late Gothic style remarkable for its decorative richness and vitality. These two qualities acquired new focus under the influence of Girolamo da Cremona, who arrived in Siena in 1470 and was employed by the cathedral until 1474. Girolamo had been associated with Mantegna in Mantua, and it was his minutely descriptive Renaissance style that Liberale imitated—at times so successfully that the work of the two artists is not easily distinguishable. However, Liberale's miniatures always exhibit a dynamic tension that contrasts with the calm, ordered world of Girolamo, and that in many respects anticipates Mannerist art of the following century. This highly charged, only superficially Renaissance style initiated an extremely fertile period of exchange among Sienese artists. Francesco di Giorgio's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Siena Pinacoteca, painted in 1472 for the monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, is conceived along lines first explored in Liberale's miniatures of 1470. The influence was, however, reciprocal, and it is wrong to make Liberale the exclusive source of innovations that stem, instead, partly from contact with Florentine art and partly from Donatello's sojourn in the city between 1457 and 1459 (see the analysis of Ciardi Dupré 1972, pp. 8–10).

Unlike Girolamo da Cremona, who was almost exclusively a miniaturist, Liberale was also active as a panel painter. Two altarpieces, one (dated 1472) in the cathedral of Viterbo and the other in the Olivetan church of Santa Francesca Romana, Rome, survive from his Sienese years (a third, earlier altarpiece is known only through two predella panels in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem, and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge). However, the most fascinating aspect of this activity was the panels Liberale painted for the fronts of marriage chests (cassoni), in which the influence of Francesco di Giorgio is so pervasive as to suggest some sort of working association between the two artists (see cat. 57 a, b, 58).

In 1476 Liberale left Siena, evidently in part because the cathedral was temporarily unable to fund further work on the same lavish scale (Eberhardt 1983, p. 192), although Vasari attributed the departure to the jealousy of local artists. After returning to Verona, he seems to have largely abandoned miniature painting in favor of altarpieces and frescoes. The works he executed over the next half century are the product of a different cultural environment, and although they are of considerable interest, they have no bearing on the history of Sienese art.



56. Roman Missal

Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena (ms.x.II.3)

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. The Missal consists of 367 + 1 folios, each 41.6 × 29.3 cm. It contains 265 decorated pages, one of which (f. 7 r) is a large miniature of Christ Judging the World, 49 are figured initials, 213 are ornamented letters, and another (f. 181 v) is a full-page illustration of the Crucifixion. The binding is 19th century (for a detailed description see Garosi 1978, pp. 18–20); Eberhardt 1986, p. 217.

The Missal, which has been presumed to have been written between 1455 and 1457/58 for the cathedral of Siena, is of primary interest for the magnificent, full-page illumination (35.2 × 23.7 cm.) of the Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saints John the Evangelist and the Magdalene viewed against a distant landscape. The simple but equally stunning border contains, at each corner, a fictive circular frame with a half-length figure of one of the four Evangelists and his symbol and, at the bottom, the arms of the *Opera* (administration) of the cathedral. This is unquestionably the miniature for which Liberale was paid by the Opera del Duomo on April 23, 1471 (“un Crocefisso per un messale s’è fatto di nuovo”); see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 35, 93–95, 237 doc. 78, 249 doc. 157, who corrects an earlier mistranscription of the date.

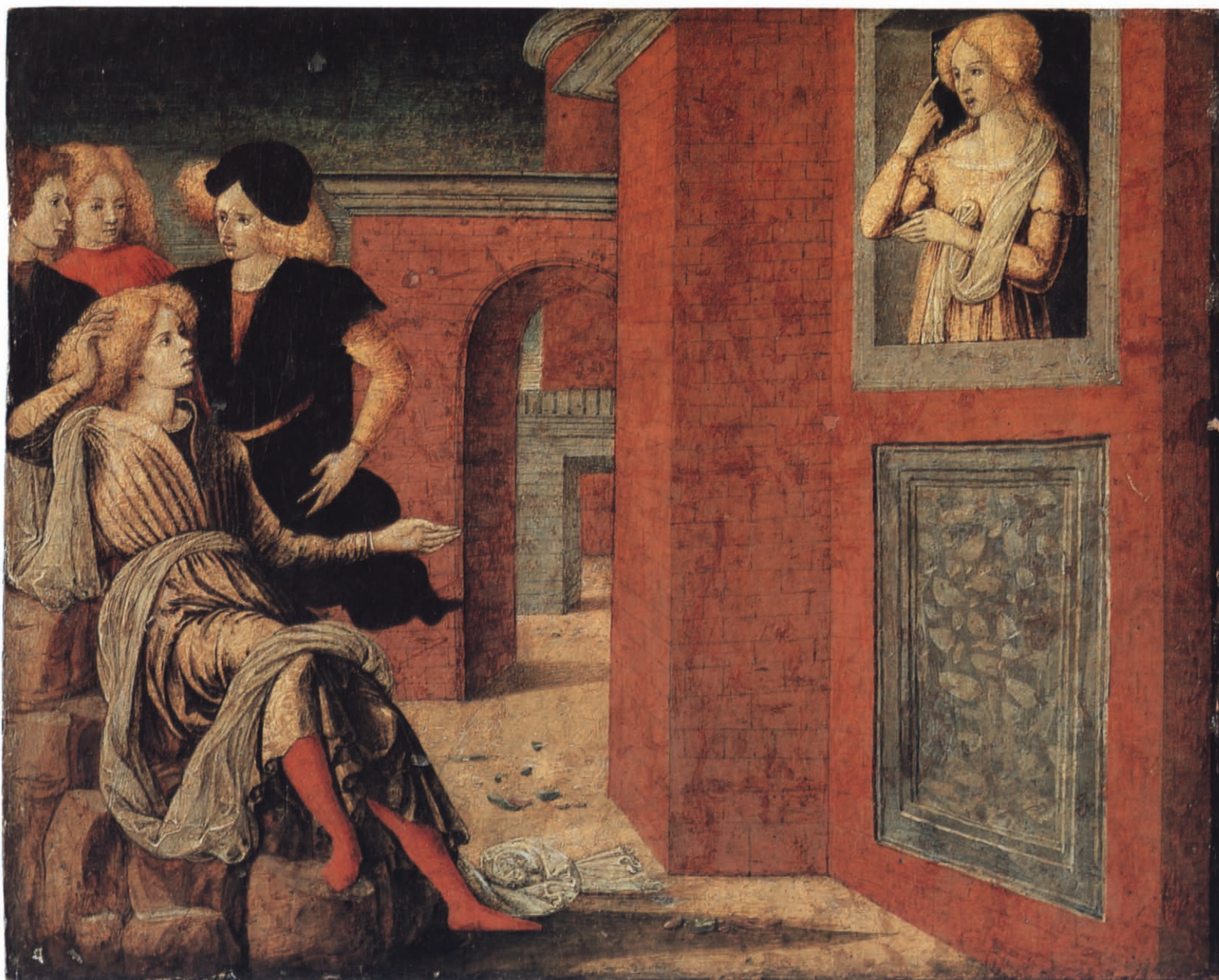
Liberale’s illuminations in the cathedral choir books consist of decorated letters or narrative scenes whose shapes and compositions were largely determined by the enframing initial. Here, by contrast, the picture field is rectangular, and there is no inherent conflict between the narrative and expressive content of the scene and its function as decoration. Liberale has, however, subdivided the scene with the exceptionally elongated cross, defining a self-contained space for each figure. It is doubtful that he would have arrived at the careful staging—the skull set at the edge of the picture plane and the figures positioned on a plateau behind which is a distant vista—without the precedent of Girolamo da Cremona’s Mantegna-inspired settings. In February 1470 Girolamo had been paid for three large miniatures in a Gradual (codex 28.12) that was subsequently entrusted to Liberale for completion. It is in his illuminations for that choir book that Liberale first attempted to emulate the descriptive technique and figure types of Girolamo and to imitate his pearl-encrusted borders. The treatment of the frame and of the landscape background of this miniature clearly derives from Girolamo’s miniatures, as does Liberale’s attention to atmospheric effects of light. The resulting work is of a greater emotional depth and resonance—sustained by the use of rich colors heightened with gold—than any earlier illumination.

Although the major influence underlying the creation of this pivotal masterpiece was that of Girolamo da Cremona,

Liberale clearly was responsive to the most progressive Sienese artists as well. This is especially evident in the figure of Christ, whose beautifully described torso and tautly delineated form reflect the study of a work by Matteo di Giovanni, which Liberale has invested with a pathos that is his alone.

The remaining illuminations in the Missal have been associated with a payment to Battista di Fruosino on August 6, 1471, for 49 medium and large miniatures, 208 very small ones, and a large one “nel principio del messale . . . à fatti a uno messale nuovo” (Eberhardt 1983, pp. 93–95). In point of fact, these miniatures are by three different hands. One artist, principally responsible for the decoration of the margins on seven gatherings (ff. 78 v–163 v), is certainly North Italian, and may be Stefano di Luigi da Milano, who was paid in 1452 for illuminating 580 columns (“cholongli”) in three Missals for the cathedral (see Milanese 1854, II, p. 383; Lusini 1939, II, pp. 262–65, n. 2). The second artist, who illuminated letters on two gatherings, including historiated initials on ff. 17 v, 20 r, 21 r, 22 r, 25 r, appears to be Giovanni di Paolo. The *Massacre of the Innocents* (f. 21 r) and the *Adoration of the Magi* (f. 25 r) in particular are of notable quality, despite their small size and apparently late date. The remaining illuminations, including the *Incipit* (f. 7 r), may be by Battista di Fruosino, although they are distinctly Florentine in character. Battista was employed on Missals for the cathedral as early as 1457 (Milanese 1854, II, p. 383).

KC



57 a

57 a. Scene from a Novella

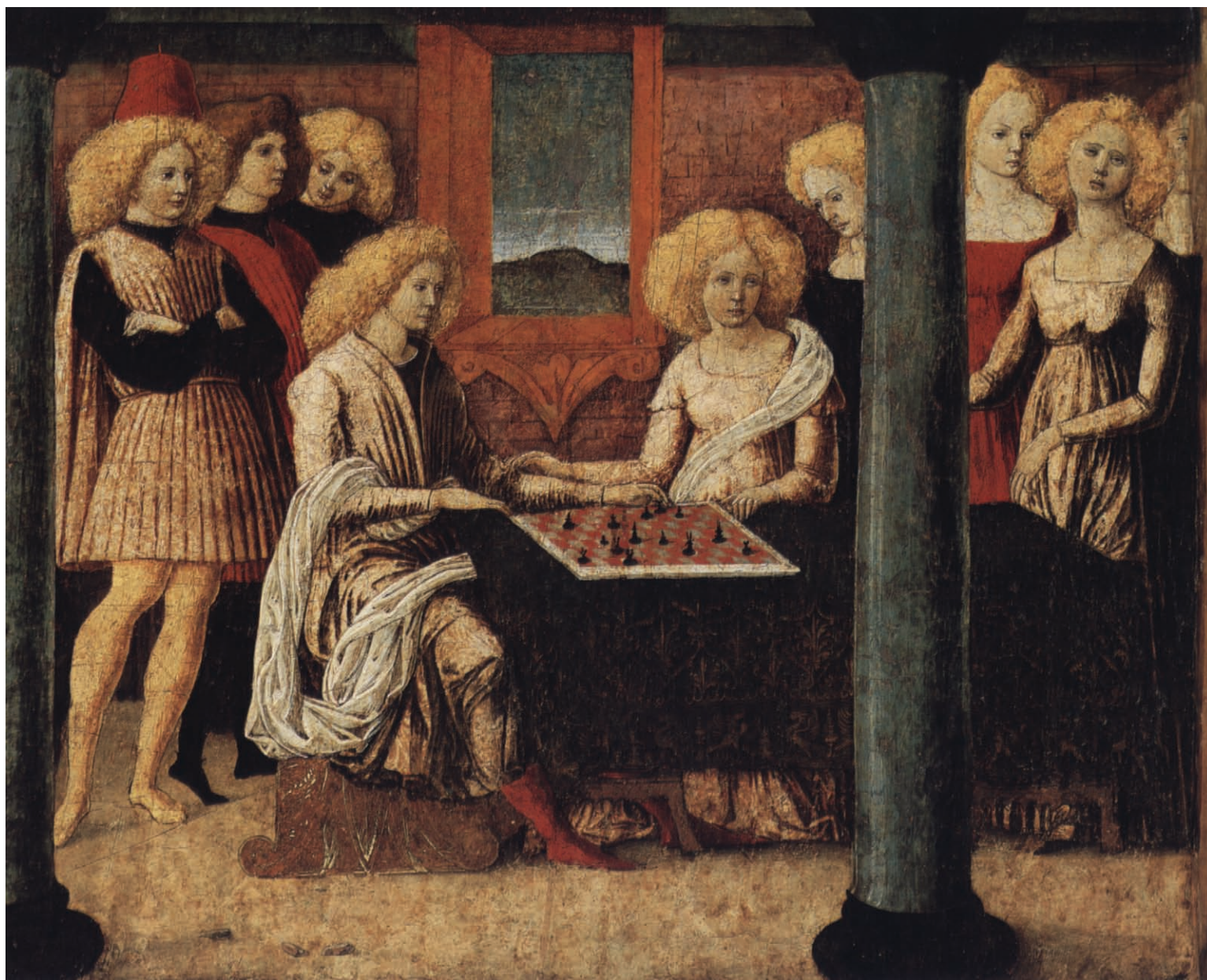
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 33.4 × 41.8 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned to .9 cm. and cradled. The paint surface has been cut on the right, but the original edge is visible on the other three sides.

57 b. The Chess Players

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 34.9 × 41.3 cm.; painted surface 33.3 × 40.5 cm. The panel, which has a horizontal grain, has been thinned to .9 cm. and cradled. The paint surface has been cut on the left, but there is evidence of the original edge on the other three sides. The surface of this panel, and of catalogue 57 a, is worn and scratched, which is typical of cassone panels.



57 b

These two well-known panels were first associated as parts of a marriage chest (cassone) or other piece of furniture by Perkins (1928, pp. 68–69). Subsequently, Weller (1940, pp. 162–72) demonstrated that a third, fragmentary panel at the Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence, formed an extension to the left side of the *Chess Players*: It shows a group of male spectators framed between two columns identical to those in the *Chess Players*. Weller considered the *Scene from a Novella*, then in the Wauters collection, Brussels, possibly from a companion chest, and he proposed that the *Chess*

Players was completed on the right by a lost panel showing female spectators. It can now be established on technical grounds that the *Scene from a Novella*, the panel at I Tatti, and the *Chess Players* formed the complete uninterrupted surface of the front of a cassone 110 cm. long, on which were depicted two consecutive episodes of a single story. (The I Tatti panel, which measures 34.5 × 27.5 cm., is cut on both vertical edges, and while the column at the right aligns with the left-hand column in the *Chess Players*, the brick wall visible to the left of the figures matches up with that in the *Scene from a Novella*.)

At the left, a blond, elegantly attired youth sits on a pile of stones contemplating a maiden who appears at the window of a brightly colored palace. Accompanied by three companions, who reappear in the *Chess Players*, he extends his left hand inquisitively toward the maiden, who seems to invite him to join her. In the adjacent scene, the front wall of the palace has been removed to reveal, through three columns, an interior in which the youth and maiden are engaged in a game of chess. To judge from the pieces on the board, which are of one color, the youth has just won the game, and in apparent response to this the maiden places her right hand on his arm as she gazes into space. The male spectators look on intently while at least one of the female companions seems disconcerted at the outcome.

The *Chess Players* has been thought to possibly illustrate an episode from the chivalric tale of *Huon de Bordeaux*, in which Huon obtains the right to sleep with King Ivoryn's daughter by defeating her at a game of chess (the princess, enamored of Huon, lost the game on purpose). However, no episode in the tale explains the left-hand scene, and the literary source for this enchanting narrative is a still-unidentified novella.

Until 1948, the panels were, with one exception (Schubring 1927, pp. 156–57), attributed to Francesco di Giorgio. Since that time discussions of authorship have focused on Girolamo da Cremona and Liberale da Verona (see Zeri and Gardner 1986, pp. 26–27, for a full bibliography). There is no question that the three fragments are by the same hand as catalogue 58 and two other cassone panels in the Louvre and in Avignon showing, respectively, the *Rape of Europa* and the *Rape of Helen*. As Eberhardt (1983, pp. 248–49, n. 253) has noted, all of

these panels are related in style to Liberale's documented miniatures from 1473 on. It would be difficult, indeed, to find an analogy for the unrelated perspective of the palace wall and the two gates in the *Scene from a Novella* in any of Girolamo's certain work, while the curious console supporting the window in the *Chess Players* is a recurring motif in Liberale's miniatures, appearing in his illustration of *Christ Washing the Feet of Saint Peter*, painted between 1467 and 1469 for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (codex Y, f. 1 v: now in Chiusi Cathedral), as well as in a miniature of 1475 in one of the Antiphonaries for the cathedral of Siena (codex 10L, f. 107 v: see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 157–58). The figure types are derived from those of Girolamo, but equally important is the imitation of Francesco di Giorgio's patterned fabrics for the costumes of the protagonists and the table covering. As with catalogue 58, it is worth considering whether the picture was not produced in Francesco di Giorgio's workshop. It is clear, in any event, that the architectural vocabulary and the wonderfully decorative palette are indebted to the example of Francesco di Giorgio.

One of the charms of these pictures is the ideal of beauty to which they testify: pale skins, achieved with the use of asses' milk, sulfur, and sublimate, and bleached, platinum hair. These vogues were censored by Saint Bernardino, without much enduring effect, in a sermon bemoaning the time spent "bleaching . . . hair in the sun, washing and drying, washing and drying again . . . and not even in a private place, but in the squares and streets." Sienese women were well known for their beauty and vanity.

None of the scenes can be traced prior to 1927.

KC



57 a, b: scaled reconstruction



58. Scene of an Ancient Ambush

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 40 × 119 cm.; painted surface 36 × 115 cm. There is a bare extension of the panel, which has not been thinned, on all sides, where an engaged frame was attached. The original, lipped edge of the paint surface is intact. The worn and scratched surface is typical of cassone panels.

At the far right, standing before a city identified by a pyramidal tower (the pyramid of Caius Cestius), a domed church (the Pantheon), and a stepped tower (the Torre delle Milizie?) as Rome, a woman raises her arms in despair over the dead youth at her feet. In the foreground, separated from the tents of an encampment by rocky outcroppings, mounted horsemen invade an elaborate meal set outdoors. One helmeted soldier has dismounted and raises his sword to strike a seated soldier, while a footsoldier prepares to throw a lance. At the far left other figures escape to a walled city. The subject would appear to derive from Roman history but cannot be identified with any familiar episode recounted in Plutarch, the most common source for such cassone panels.

The picture is unpublished and was only discovered in 1986, when it appeared on the art market. It is unmistakably by the same hand as catalogue 57 a, b and two additional panels from marriage chests (cassoni) in the Louvre and in Avignon showing, respectively, the *Rape of Europa* and the *Rape of Helen*. As in the last two of these works, the pictorial space is shallow, with the action directed laterally, across the surface, from right to left, suggesting that in each case only one of a pair of cassone fronts has survived. The bibliography attributing these

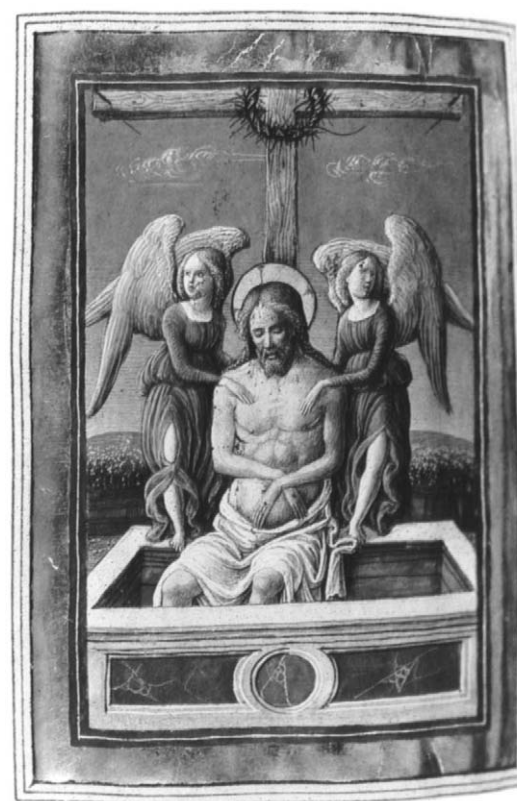
works to Girolamo da Cremona or Liberale da Verona is extensive (for a summary, see Laclotte and Mognetti 1976, no. 110). Eberhardt (1983, pp. 248–49, n. 253) has, on the basis of comparison with documented miniatures by Liberale, established their authorship and their approximate date of 1473. There is, indeed, no parallel in Girolamo's documented work for the animated poses of the figures in the cassone front shown here, which is Liberale's most ambitious narrative composition. An analogy for the figure at the left, who turns to look backward while fleeing the scene, occurs in a Gradual illuminated by Liberale for the cathedral in 1472 (codex 21.6, f. 21 v: see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 97–108), while the border of a page in a Gradual illuminated in 1473 (codex 23.8, f. 36 r: see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 109–16) offers a precise counterpart to the head decorating a shield at the right-hand side. The motif can be traced to Mantegna's *Saint James before Herod Agrippa* in the Church of the Eremitani, Padua, and was transmitted to Liberale by Girolamo.

As in all of Liberale's work, the composition is essentially Gothic: The ground plane is discontinuous, with space suggested by the careful juxtaposition of unrelated elements and isolated vistas. The scene lacks the natural focus provided by even the most casual perspective construction. Liberale has, however, turned these conventions to advantage by explicitly evoking ancient battle sarcophagi, with their densely interlocked compositions of figures and horses. The central equestrian group—which forecasts Leonardo da Vinci's later composition for the *Battle of Anghiari*—seems to derive from a sarcophagus similar to one in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome, showing a battle of Amazons. Liberale could have seen such a relief while he was in Rome painting the al-

tarpiece for Santa Francesca Romana. In any event, the same source seems to have been employed later by Antonio Federighi for the marble pedestal at the entrance to the chapel of San Giovanni in Siena Cathedral.

In this panel Liberale aligned himself with the most progressive trends in Sienese art, characterized, on the one hand, by Matteo di Giovanni's interest in the work of Antonio Pollaiuolo and, on the other, by Francesco di Giorgio's concurrent fascination with the sculpture of Donatello and that of antiquity. A number of recurring motifs in the paintings of Liberale and Francesco di Giorgio suggest that between 1470 and 1475 the two artists were in close touch with each other, and it is not impossible that the cassone panels produced by Liberale at this time were contracted through Francesco di Giorgio, who seems otherwise to have had a near-monopoly on this sort of work. This would explain, for example, Liberale's use of a favored technique of Francesco's of decorating costumes with floral designs etched into the pigment so as to reveal an underlying layer of gold leaf. It is, perhaps, worth noting that the center of a cassone front made by Liberale after his return to Verona (now in the Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona) is decorated with two figures modeled in gesso that, again, are derived from the work of Francesco di Giorgio. Nonetheless, in 1473 Francesco had yet to produce a narrative as dynamic as this one.

KC



59: f. 91 v

59. Book of Hours

Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis Collection, Ms. 118

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. The book consists of 155 folios, each 10.7 × 9.2 cm. The numeration is modern. In addition to a large number of small, decorated initials, four pages (ff. 15 r, 92 r, 96 r, and 133 r) are decorated with a "white-vine" (*bianchi girari*) motif. On three facing pages (ff. 91 v, 95 v, and 132 v) are miniatures for the Office of the Cross, the Office of the Dead, and the Penitential Psalms. The binding is modern, but the clasps, one of which is inscribed AVE MARIA, may be original.

This exquisite Book of Hours, with its fine humanist lettering and "white-vine" decorations inspired by Carolingian manuscripts, bears an inscription on the inside of the cover attesting to its ownership by a nun from the Piccolomini family: "Iste liber est sororis Artemia piccolominj." In the event that the script appears to be of the sixteenth century, the owner may be tentatively identified with either Artemia di Raffaello di Biagio Piccolomini (b. 1525) or Artemia (Artemesia) Giovanna di Scipione di



59: f. 132 v

Jacomo Piccolomini (b. 1533; see Moceni 1713, ff. 246 r, 247 r). Both were descendants of Guid'Antonio di Biagio Piccolomini, who was an ambassador of Pius II in 1462 and was knighted by the duke of Calabria in 1480. The calendar is Dominican (Wolf 1937, p. 132). The book belonged to Susan B. Mines prior to its purchase by John Lewis. Levi d'Ancona (1964, pp. 66–67) attributed the three small but fine miniatures of the Dead Christ Supported by Two Angels (f. 91 v, 8.4 × 5.7 cm.), Death Standing in a Landscape (f. 95 v, 8.4 × 5.6 cm.), and David Kneeling before God (f. 132 v, 8.3 × 5.7 cm.) to Girolamo da Cremona, comparing their style to a Nativity in one of the cathedral choir books (codex 18.3, f. 58 r) that she believed was painted by Girolamo in 1473. Eberhardt (1983, pp. 125–30, 220–21, n. 225) has convincingly argued that the Nativity is, instead, among the miniatures for which Liberale da Verona was paid that same year, and that those in the Book of Hours are by him as well, and date to about 1475 (see also Righetti 1974, p. 42, n. 23, who rejects the attribution to Girolamo in favor of an assistant). Eberhardt further suggested associating the Book of Hours with Vasari's statement that Liberale illuminated some books "in the library of the Piccolomini" (1568, 1906 ed., V, p. 278). Whether the miniatures were commissioned by a member of the Piccolomini family—conceivably Guid'Antonio—is conjectural, since their coat of arms is conspicuously absent.

In analyzing the three miniatures in the Lewis Book of Hours, the small scale should be borne in mind. This must have had an inhibiting effect on Liberale's restless imagination, which responded more readily to the large, irregular picture fields of the initials in the cathedral choir books. The figure types depend closely on those of Girolamo da Cremona, although the execution is drier and the modeling more schematic than in anything Girolamo painted. On the other hand, there is a remarkable attention to the expressive potential of details, such as the nails that pierce the arms of the cross, aligned along converging diagonals, or the menacing scythe held by the turbaned figure of Death. The last miniature is, indeed, a masterpiece, in which the luministic interests of Girolamo and the formal concerns of Liberale are united in a work of great purity.

KC



59: f. 95 v (enlarged)

BENVENUTO DI GIOVANNI

(Benvenuto di Giovanni di Meo del Guasta)

1436–1509/17

Benvenuto di Giovanni was first recorded as an artist in 1453, when he was at work with Vecchietta on the frescoes in the Siena Baptistery. His earliest dated paintings—an altarpiece of the Annunciation, with Saints Michael and Catherine, signed and dated 1466, in the church of San Girolamo, Volterra, and a *biccherna* cover of 1468—prove that he was a pupil and not just a casual associate of the older master. However, he was quick to respond to the work of Liberale da Verona and of Girolamo da Cremona upon their arrival in Siena in 1466 and 1470, respectively, adapting their brilliant palettes, their use of a quick, nervous line, and their love of a proliferation of fantastical detail to the more restrained style of Vecchietta. Indeed, no other painter in Siena, after Francesco di Giorgio, was as strongly affected by the two Lombard miniaturists as Benvenuto. The growing influence of Liberale can be traced through a series of altarpieces dating from 1470 (in Volterra and Sinalunga), 1475 (in Vescovado di Murlo; formerly in Montepertuso), and 1479 (in London; formerly in Orvieto), as well as in a number of small-scale works. A clear idea of Benvenuto's activity in the next decade has been obscured by the lack of securely dated paintings. He was, however, responsible at that time for the cartoons for three Sibyls and for a *Sacrifice of Jephthah* (1483–85) for the pavement of Siena Cathedral, and for miniatures in the cathedral choir books (1482).

Works from the last two decades of Benvenuto's career—commencing with his altarpiece of the Ascension, dated 1491, in the Siena Pinacoteca, up to the altarpiece of 1509 in the Collegiata in Sinalunga—have, in general, received unsympathetic attention from critics, who speak of the “fossilization” of his style; these late works are seen as the products of a collaboration with his son, Girolamo di Benvenuto (1470–1524). That father and son collaborated cannot be doubted, but the fact that there exist two altarpieces of the Assumption of the Virgin, both painted in 1498 but one signed by Benvenuto (formerly in The Metropolitan Museum of Art; sale, Sotheby's, New York, June 1, 1978, no. 133) and the other by Girolamo (Museo Diocesano di Arte Sacra, Montalcino) demonstrates that by at least that date they also painted independently, and that the difficulty of distinguishing between their respective works has been greatly overstated.

Of the major Siennese painters of the second half of the fifteenth century, Benvenuto was the most successful in combining an interest in perspective and distinctly Renaissance decorative details with a typically Siennese feeling for pattern and color, creating works notable for their inventive compositions, their crisp, elegant design, and their brilliant landscape and architectural settings.

60. Madonna and Child

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Robert Lehman Collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 70.4 × 46 cm.; painted surface 61.5 × 37.4 cm. The panel has been thinned and cradled. The engaged molding is original. The frame is contemporary and probably also original to the panel.

Inscribed (in the Virgin's halo): AVE·GRATIA·PLENA·
DOM[INVS TECVM]

The Virgin, shown half-length and standing behind a marble parapet on which the Christ Child is supported, offers him the pomegranate (a symbol of the Resurrection) that she holds in her left hand. The Child, wrapped in a loose, pale-blue to plum-colored sash (possibly an allusion to the winding-sheet in which Christ was buried), and seated on a double brocaded cushion studded with pearls, reaches up with his left hand to play with the lace on his mother's bodice. The opulence of the gilding



and punched decoration, and the soft, subdued colors and subtle textures of the fabrics and of the marble parapet make this one of Benvenuto di Giovanni's most beautiful and satisfying images.

The picture, complete with its elaborate tabernacle frame, was first noted at the sale of the Ernest Odier collection in Paris (Hôtel Drouot, April 26–27, 1889, no. 15). The coat of arms of the Griffoli family of Siena is incised on the back of the frame, so that it must be assumed that the painting had earlier belonged to them. Prior to being thinned and cradled, the back of the panel reputedly bore the coat of arms of Pius II Piccolomini, for whom, it has been supposed, the picture was painted (R. Lehman 1928, pl. 54). The presence of these coats of arms cannot now be confirmed, but since Pius II died in 1465, the arms could establish this as the earliest known work by Benvenuto di Giovanni. Fredericksen and Davison (1966, p. 27) prefer to date the picture late in Benvenuto's career, close to the *Ascension* altarpiece of 1491 in Siena, suggesting that the arms might have been those of Pius III (Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini), who died in 1503.

The evidence is not sufficient to allow any conclusions about the identity of the patron. However, the painting clearly dates from the beginning, not the end, of Benvenuto di Giovanni's career—specifically, before either of the altarpieces that he painted in 1470: the *Nativity* in the Pinacoteca Comunale, Volterra, and the *Annunciation* in the church of San Bernardino in Sinalunga. Both of these monumental narrative images, a type of painting at which Benvenuto di Giovanni excelled, already reveal the young artist's keen interest in the innovations of Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona, the last of whom only arrived in Siena that year, whereas the Lehman *Madonna and Child* is still redolent of the heavier, more somber grace of Benvenuto's teacher, Vecchietta—particularly of Vecchietta's altarpiece of 1457 in the Uffizi in Florence. A strong case has been made for dating the picture between 1466 and 1470 (Pope-Hennessy 1987, p. 162). The *Madonna* clearly relates to two contemporary paintings by Benvenuto: the *Annunciation* of 1466 in the church of San Girolamo, Volterra, and the *biccherna* cover of 1468 in the Archivio di Stato, but whether it is contemporary or slightly earlier than these works is not clear. Under the circumstances, the notion that the picture may have been painted for Pope Pius II cannot be entirely dismissed.

To a greater degree than in any other devotional panel of the *Madonna and Child* by Benvenuto, the emphasis in this picture is on realism. The ungainly proportions of the Child were evidently intended to replace the idealized infants of Sano di Pietro, and they go well beyond the more superficial realism of Matteo di Giovanni's paintings in this genre. Instead of floating in his mother's

arms, the Child is seated upon a double cushion resting on a parapet, the projecting sides of which strengthen the illusion of space. The formula is Florentine in origin—Baldovinetti's *Madonna and Child* in the Louvre offers an instructive analogy—and it marks a distinct departure from Sienese convention. No less notable is the carefully rendered veining of the marble, with its finely cut moldings. The expertly counterfeited pearls on the cushions and on the Virgin's bodice, and the accurately described cast shadows have, in Benvenuto's hands, acquired an almost abstract character. In his subsequent work, he reverted to a more typically Sienese emphasis on elegance, lyricism, and otherworldly sweetness that culminated in the center panel of the Montepertuso altarpiece of 1475.

LK

61. Psalter

Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale, Badia di Cava dei Tirreni (Salerno) (codex Senensis C.)

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. The Psalter comprises 215 pages, 58 × 43.5 cm., of which the first three are numbered in Arabic, the rest in Roman numerals. Five initials were decorated by Benvenuto di Giovanni. F. 1 r: the initial *B* (Beatus vir qui non abiit . . .), with *David in Ecstasy*, 18.7 × 17.5 cm.; f. 25 v: the initial *D* (Domine in virtute tua . . .), with *Solomon in Prayer*, 11.7 × 12 cm.; f. 43 v: the initial *D* (Domine misere nostri . . .), with a *Kneeling Monk*, 8.9 × 9.2 cm.; f. 133 v: the initial *U* (Ut quid deus repulisti), with a *Kneeling Monk*, 12.1 × 9.9 cm.; and f. 182 r: the initial *D* (Domine exaudi orationem . . .), with a *Kneeling Monk*, 9.9 × 9.4 cm.). In addition, 156 large initials with floral, fruit, and biomorphic decorations may have been illuminated in part by Benvenuto. The leather binding is modern.

The illuminations in this Psalter were published by Ferdinando Bologna (1954, 51, pp. 15–19), the first modern scholar to discuss Benvenuto di Giovanni's work as a miniaturist, and have been more thoroughly considered by Mario Rotili (1978, pp. 15, 95–98, 163–69). Bologna compared them stylistically to the scenes from the *Passion predella* in Washington (see cat. 62 a–e), which he believed to be part of an altarpiece by Benvenuto in San Domenico, Siena, and therefore datable to 1483 (for a discussion of the altarpiece and the problems concerning its dating, see cat. 62 a–e). All subsequent scholars have followed Bologna in placing the Psalter between 1475 and 1483—withstanding the difficulty of dating the San Domenico altarpiece to 1483 or of associating the *Passion predella* with it.

Nonetheless, a comparison of these illuminations with the *Passion predella* scenes does provide a valid ba-





61: f. 25 v



61: f. 133 v

sis for considering their style. The initial *B* with *David in Ecstasy* (f. 1 r), for example, corresponds in every essential of figure type, proportion, and pose to Christ and the angel in the *Agony in the Garden* (cat. 62 a); its landscape is not dissimilar to that in the background of the *Resurrection* (cat. 62 e); and the peculiarly abrupt foreshortening of David's left thigh is exactly paralleled in the figure of Moses (?) kneeling at the right of the *Descent into Limbo* (cat. 62 d). The rocky landscape and the sharply upturned profile of the monk in adoration in the initial *U* on f. 133 v similarly may be compared to the setting or the soldiers in the *Resurrection*, or, even more so, to certain figures in the *Way to Calvary* (cat. 62 b). It cannot be doubted that the Badia di Cava Psalter and the Washington Passion predella are more-or-less contemporary. If the Passion predella did form part of the *Ascension* altarpiece of 1491, as seems probable, the two works would share not only an approximate date but also a common provenance—the Benedictine monastery of Sant'Eugenio outside Siena. (For Benvenuto's work in Sant'Eugenio, see cat. 62 a–e.)

As with many fifteenth-century painters in Siena better known for their works on a more monumental scale, Benvenuto di Giovanni was employed as a miniaturist intermittently throughout his career. After the beginning of the fifteenth century, such practice was not common in Florence, where miniature painting was a more specialized profession. Benvenuto's earliest miniatures were produced for the Church of the Osservanza near Siena between about 1465 and 1468 (codex 3, f. 79 v, the initial *G*, with the *Stigmatization of Saint Francis*; codex 7, f. 70 r, the initial *E*, with the *Adoration of the Magi*; see Alessi 1984, pp. 177–96), and are indistinguishable in style or conception from the scenes in the predella to the *Annunciation* altarpiece of 1466 in Volterra. At this date Benvenuto was apparently not yet—or only just—familiar with the decorative innovations of Liberale da Verona, and his figure style is still dependent on the example of Vecchiotta. The same is true of the illuminations by Benvenuto in the Gradual (codex 97.3) from Santa Maria della Scala, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena (see Alessi 1984, pp. 180–85); the Gradual must be about contemporary with the Osservanza miniatures, and is certainly earlier than 1470.

In his two altarpieces of 1470, the Sinalunga *Annunciation* and the Volterra *Nativity*, Benvenuto demonstrates his keen interest in the decorative and figurative possibilities of the imported style of Liberale and of Girolamo da Cremona. His next dated miniature, a *Saint John the Evangelist* of 1477 (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo: codex 102.8, f. 62 v; see Gallavotti Cavallero 1985, pp. 213, 223), is likewise indebted almost exclusively to their influence, and has shed all vestiges of Benvenuto's legacy from Vecchiotta. The crisply highlighted, brittle drapery

folds and the angular figure construction are characteristic once again of the artist's small-scale panel paintings from the period—notably, the predella to the Monteper-tuso altarpiece of 1475 or the *biccherna* cover of 1474. The decorated borders of the initial and of the page are more illusionistically three-dimensional than in Benvenuto's earlier manuscripts. His next miniature, representing Christ giving the keys to Saint Peter in an initial *S* (Antifonario della Natività di San Giovanni Battista, codex 15.Q, c. 34 v, in the Piccolomini Library; see Ciardi Dupré 1972, fig. 299), documented to 1482, is less clearly visualized or precisely rendered as an image, and does not compare as favorably to his putative contemporary works on panel. The decorated border of the initial, however, is more exuberant and of a more unrestrained fantasy than perhaps any other effort of his career.

The borders of the pages and the initials in the Badia di Cava Psalter return to more traditional botanical motifs, but retain the aggressive, illusionistic effect of the 1482 Antiphonary. *David in Ecstasy* (f. 1 r), for example, is cropped behind the double-helix border of the initial *B*, while the contours of the initial *U* on f. 133 v are broken by carefully studied oak (?) leaves looped around its tubular frame. The same highly naturalistic leaves decorate the vine tendril trailing down the left margin of this page, replacing the more stylized foliate shapes common in Sienese illuminations. Benvenuto's figures in this Psalter have regained the crisp, nervous precision characteristic of his mature style, but which is strangely lacking in the miniature of 1482. The Badia di Cava manuscript is the last known work by Benvenuto in this medium, and in many respects it represents the culmination of his efforts both in small-scale narrative design and in the visualization and rendering of decorative details.

LK

THE PASSION PREDELLA (catalogue 62 a–e)

These five panels depicting events from Christ's Passion constitute the finest preserved narrative complex from Benvenuto's career. They formed the predella to what was evidently an altarpiece of unusual size and importance (their combined width is 248.4 cm., excluding possible framing elements or internal divisions). Four of the panels were cited in 1824 in the collection of Luigi de Angelis, custodian of the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena and the initial organizer of the Pinacoteca (see Bandera 1974, pp. 13, 17, notes 40, 41). Unfortunately, de Angelis did not record their provenance, which remains a subject of speculation (nor, for that matter, did he mention their author, although he remarked that their style could be confused with that of Mantegna).

Two theories have been advanced concerning the identity of the altarpiece to which the panels belonged. The first associates the paintings with an altarpiece in the church of San Domenico, Siena, showing the Madonna and Child with a papal saint (possibly Gregory, but certainly not Augustine, with whom he is almost universally identified), and Saints James, John the Evangelist, and Sebastian (Bologna 1954, p. 17), which is commonly regarded as one of the masterpieces of Benvenuto's maturity and related, erroneously, to a documented commission of 1483 (for the document see Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 330; Bandera 1974, p. 9, has demonstrated the incongruity between the document and the altarpiece in San Domenico). However, the main panel of the San Domenico altarpiece measures 202.5 cm., including its engaged molding (Torriti 1983, III, pp. 144–45), which seems prohibitively small for the Passion predella.¹ Moreover, although the San Domenico altarpiece exhibits the nervous but elegant draftsmanship and the mannered attenuation of the figures characteristic of Benvenuto's paintings about 1480, the Passion predella evinces the stiff poses, caricatured figure types, and elaborate surface patterning that distinguish Benvenuto's later works. The dating of the series by Bandera (1974, p. 13) close to 1490 is likely to be correct, and the suggestion—raised but dismissed by Shapley (1979, p. 66)—that these panels originally were below the *Ascension* altarpiece of 1491 (now in the Siena Pinacoteca; see fig. 1) seems probable. Not only is the altarpiece of the requisite width (245 cm.), but its subject is complementary, the predella representing events just prior to the Ascension. Furthermore, Benvenuto's figure and landscape style, palette, and treatment of incidental architectural details are consistent in the main panel and in the scenes of the predella.

The *Ascension* altarpiece has been criticized as a tired work executed with extensive intervention by Benvenuto's son, Girolamo, but cleaning has revealed it to be an almost entirely autograph painting, and one of the most impressive efforts of Benvenuto's long career, both for its remarkable size (nearly 13 × 8 ft.) and for the extraordinary richness of detail carefully distributed across its vast surface. Typical of Benvenuto's late style is the blend of incisive realism with exuberant decorative patterning, whether in the rendering of fabrics, anatomy, or landscapes, as well as his preference for stiff, angular figures and poses, noticeable first in the San Domenico altarpiece but more exaggerated in works from after 1491. These same characteristics inform each panel of the Washington predella. Elements such as the picket fence in the *Agony in the Garden* (cat. 62 a); the boys climbing trees in the *Way to Calvary* (cat. 62 b); the rearing horse, the page, or the children on the hillside in the *Crucifixion* (cat. 62 c); or the vine arbor in the *Resurrection* (cat. 62 e) recall Benvenuto's fascination with real-



Figure 1. Benvenuto di Giovanni. *The Ascension*.
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

istic details that is apparent from his earliest works, while the fantastical rock formations in the *Descent into Limbo* (cat. 62 d) and the *Resurrection*, the oversized pebbles colored like glass beads in all five scenes, or the playfully imaginative armor of the soldiers in the *Way to Calvary*, the *Crucifixion*, and the *Resurrection* evoke his sympathetic response, from 1470 on, to illuminations by Liberale da Verona. In fact, the figures of Christ and his two tormentors in the *Way to Calvary* may well derive from an illumination by Liberale in one of the choir books in the cathedral (codex 22.7, f. 28 r).

The *Ascension* altarpiece was brought to the Siena Pinacoteca by Luigi de Angelis from the Benedictine monastery of Sant'Eugenio,² where it formed part of an extensive decorative program undertaken by Benvenuto di Giovanni beginning most likely in the 1480s. In addition to the altarpiece, Benvenuto was responsible for frescoes of the *Resurrection* and the *Crucifixion*, which were transferred in 1849 from the refectory to the lateral walls of the church presbytery; a fresco of Saint Benedict in *Glory*, which was sold, in all probability, between 1866

and 1895, and is now in the Museo Bardini, Florence (Scalia and de Benedictis 1984, pp. 236–37); and an illuminated Psalter (cat. 61), which was brought by the Benedictines to San Domenico in Siena, probably in 1786, when they took possession of that monastery, and which, about 1929, was moved to the Benedictine foundation at Cava dei Tirreni.

LK

1. Alternatively, it has been proposed that three somewhat smaller panels (32 × 40 cm.), the *Massacre of the Innocents*, the *Martyrdom of Saint Fabian* (?), and the *Miracle of Saint James*, are parts of the predella to the San Domenico altarpiece (Laclotte and Mognetti 1976, nos. 28, 29). These must have come from a different complex, however, as the *Martyrdom* shows an episcopal rather than a papal saint. Recently, it has been suggested that the San Domenico altarpiece was not painted for that church originally, but was moved there from Sant'Eugenio by the Benedictines in 1786, when they took possession of the abandoned Dominican monastery (Rotili 1978, pp. 95, 106, n. 21; for Benvenuto di Giovanni's work in Sant'Eugenio see note 2 and cat. 61, 62 a–c). More convincingly, Max Seidel (verbal communication) has argued that Benvenuto's San Domenico altarpiece is the one painted for the Borghesi Chapel and referred to as complete in Matteo di Giovanni's 1478 contract for the *Saint Barbara* altarpiece in the chapel of the Artigiani Tedeschi (cf. Milanese 1854, II, p. 364).

2. The altarpiece was recorded in the sacristy atrium in Sant'Eugenio by della Valle 1786, III, p. 44: "di costui [Benvenuto] e una tavola grande, in cui non ben mi sovviene se sia dipinta l'Ascensione, o l'Assunta, ho pero presenti gli Apostoli, alcuni de' quali hanno fierezza; e vi lessi il nome del pittore, e l'anno, in cui opero. Tre anni sono stava nell'atrio della Sagrestia di Monistero, fuori della città." In his personal copy of the *Lettere sanesi*, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Luigi de Angelis appended in the margin: "Questo quadro fu fatto trasportare da me nelle stanze della Sapienza e collocato ivi a capo dell'ala destra del Chiostro il di 29 Novembre 1810. Niuno sapeva nulla. Io lo strappai dalle mani dell'oblivione. Vi occorsero otto Uomini. Si legge in fondo del medesimo: Opus Benvenuti di Iohannis Senensis 1491. Figura l'Ascensione; era coperto di sterco di piccione, e di polvere." Although de Angelis owned four of the panels from the Passion predella, there are no indications that he considered them part of the *Ascension* altarpiece and that he might also have acquired them from Sant'Eugenio.

62 a. The Agony in the Garden

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 43.3 × 48 cm.; painted surface 42 × 46.7 cm. The panel, which is 1.4 cm. thick, has been cradled.

The scene takes place at night. At the right, kneeling on a small rise of ground behind a picket fence, Christ prays that he will be spared the bitter cup of his fate—symbolized by the chalice and cross being offered to him by an angel hovering in the upper right corner of the panel. In the left foreground, Peter, James, and John, the three apostles who accompanied Christ to Gethsemane, are



asleep, although they had been asked to keep watch. Above them, in the middle distance, are the other eight apostles.

This panel entered the Kress Collection separately from the other four, with which it self-evidently belongs. It was first recorded in the Contini-Bonacossi Collection, Florence, from which it was purchased by Samuel Kress in 1938 (Shapley 1979, p. 65). In contrast to the fine state of the others, it is abraded throughout.

Bandera (1974, p. 14) attributed Benvenuto's sensitivity to atmospheric effects and the rendering of the nocturnal light in this panel to his knowledge of North Italian illuminations and paintings. It should be recalled, however, that earlier in the century both Giovanni di Paolo and Sassetta depicted a nocturnal *Agony in the Garden*, and that in the *Nativity* of 1470 in Volterra Benvenuto experimented with night scenes with a miraculous source of illumination.

LK



62 b. The Way to Calvary

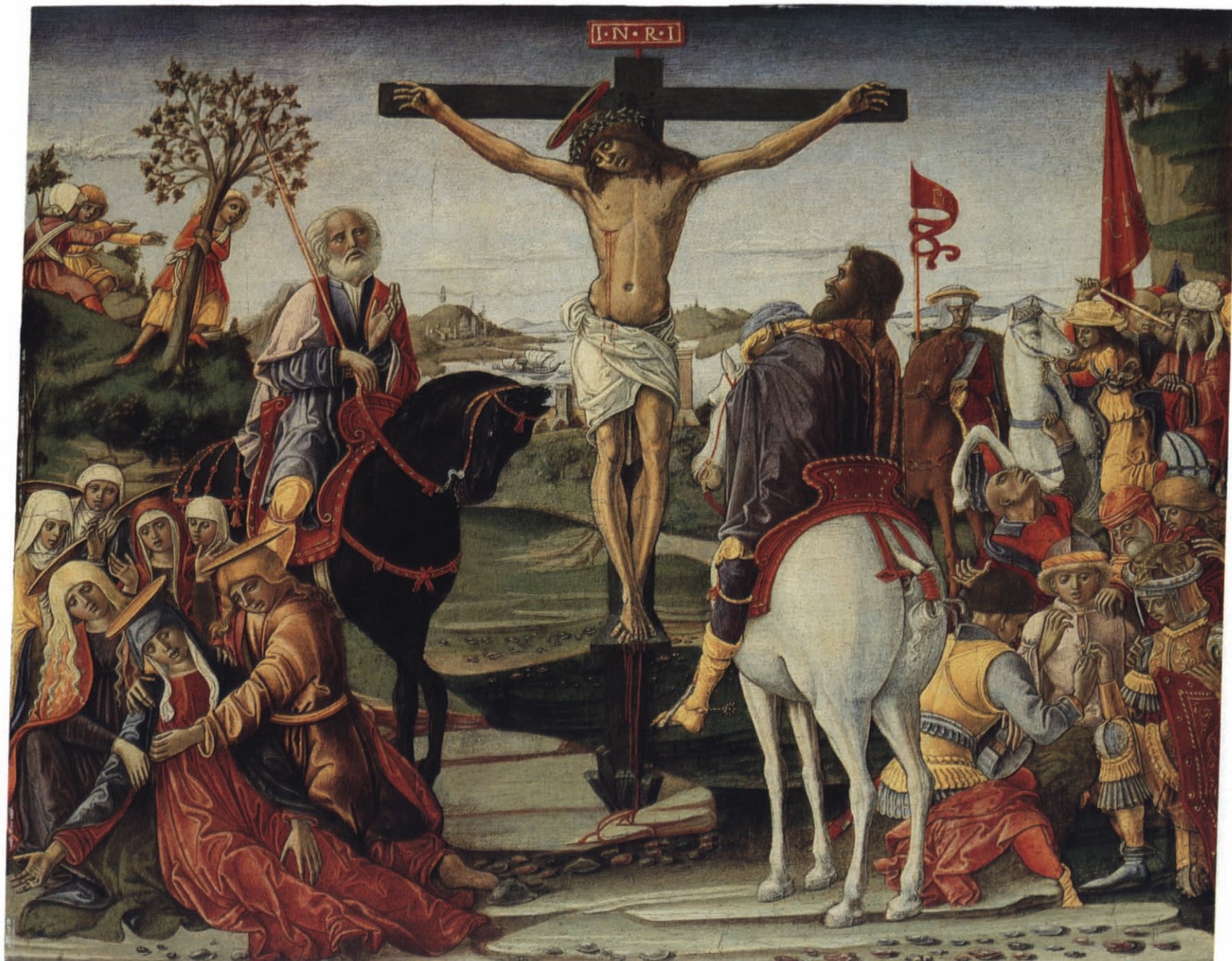
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 42.8 × 50.1 cm.; painted surface 41.4 × 47.4 cm. The panel has been thinned, backed with plywood, and cradled. The gilt borders on the right and left are original. The bottom edge of the paint surface appears to be original also.

At the center of the composition, Christ, crowned with thorns and draped in a rose-colored robe, carries his

cross, while two executioners beat him and pull on the rope around his neck. Behind him, a soldier with a baton and a red shield holds back a crowd of onlookers; another soldier in parti-colored armor is seated on an outcropping of rock in the foreground. At the right, the Virgin, supported by Saint John the Evangelist, gazes in anguish at her Son, and Saint Mary Magdalene, her head thrown back, raises her arms in despair. Visible behind these three figures are the heads of the holy women. The two young boys who climb trees to watch the events below





62 c

are a curious interpolation from depictions of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem; the motif also occurs in Vecchi-etta's fresco of *The Way to Calvary*, in the Baptistry, which was Benvenuto's compositional model (Bandera 1974, p. 14). The scene is closed off at the left by a troop of soldiers on horseback and, at the rear, by the spires and towers of the city of Jerusalem, reminiscent of the landscape backgrounds by Girolamo da Cremona.

LK

62 c. The Crucifixion

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 42.6 × 53.8 cm.; painted surface 41.2 × 52.9 cm. The panel has been thinned, backed with plywood, and cradled.

The figure of Christ hanging limp on the cross, surmounted by a bright red *titulus* that abuts the top of the composition in the center, is silhouetted against a deep river landscape related to the one in the 1491 *Ascension* in the Siena Pinacoteca. In front of Christ, but seen from behind, is the centurion on horseback, with his hat in his hands, who exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:52). Diagonally opposite him, also on horseback, is Longinus, resting on his shoulder the spear that pierced Christ's side. In conformity with a fourteenth-century Sienese innovation, the Virgin is shown seated on the ground in a swoon, supported by Saint John and by Mary, the mother of James, with the Magdalene and three holy women behind. In the lower right corner of the panel four soldiers cast lots for Christ's robes while others look on, and a page reaches up to calm a rearing horse whose rider threatens him with a baton. The three children watching from a hill in the middle distance at the left—two of whom point to the commotion—are an unprecedented detail, and underscore the remarkable inventive capacities of Benvenuto.

LK

62 d. The Descent into Limbo

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 43 × 48.7 cm.; painted surface 42.1 × 46.6 cm. The panel has been thinned, backed with plywood, and cradled. The gilt borders at the right and left are original. The bottom edge of the paint surface appears to be original also.

In marked departure from earlier treatments of the theme in Siena, Christ, draped in pale-blue robes and carrying a white banner with a red cross, is shown from behind striding across the doors of hell, which have fallen

down before an opening carved into the face of a rock. Confronting him is a crowd of patriarchs and heroes of the old dispensation, who press forward, their faces lit by Christ's radiance. At the left, Adam kneels on the threshold, an adz, or hoe, propped against his thigh, as Christ reaches down to pull him up by the hand. At the right, Moses (?), in a yellow robe, kneels and clasps Christ's right arm, while behind him John the Baptist, holding his cross-staff and banner, points to the Savior. Satan is depicted in extreme foreshortening, crushed beneath the broken gates of hell. It is possible that this remarkable conception was inspired by a well-known print designed by Mantegna in the 1470s in which Christ is similarly viewed from the back trampling the gates of hell—shown, as here, with hinge attachments. However, in the scene by Benvenuto, as in that by the Master of the Osservanza (cat. 12 c), a miraculous light playing across the rocks of the cave is both the symbolic and poetic animating force.

LK

62 e. The Resurrection

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. 43.5 × 49.7 cm.; painted surface 42.1 × 47.4 cm. The panel has been thinned, backed with plywood, and cradled. The gilt borders at the right and left are original. The bottom edge of the paint surface appears to be original also.

Christ, again draped in pale-blue robes and carrying a white banner with a red cross, stands at the center of the composition, atop a classical strigilated sarcophagus, before the opening of a tomb in the rock that makes a conscious allusion to the gates of hell in the preceding panel. The marble door of the tomb, with a carved wreath decoration, has fallen forward diagonally onto the ground before him, scattering the six sleeping soldiers in brightly colored armor who are shown frozen, "as dead men" (Matthew 28:4). To the left, in part supported by the rock, is a bare vine arbor and a picket fence, and, in the distance, a deep landscape showing two broad, looping rivers winding back to the horizon between more rocks and hills.

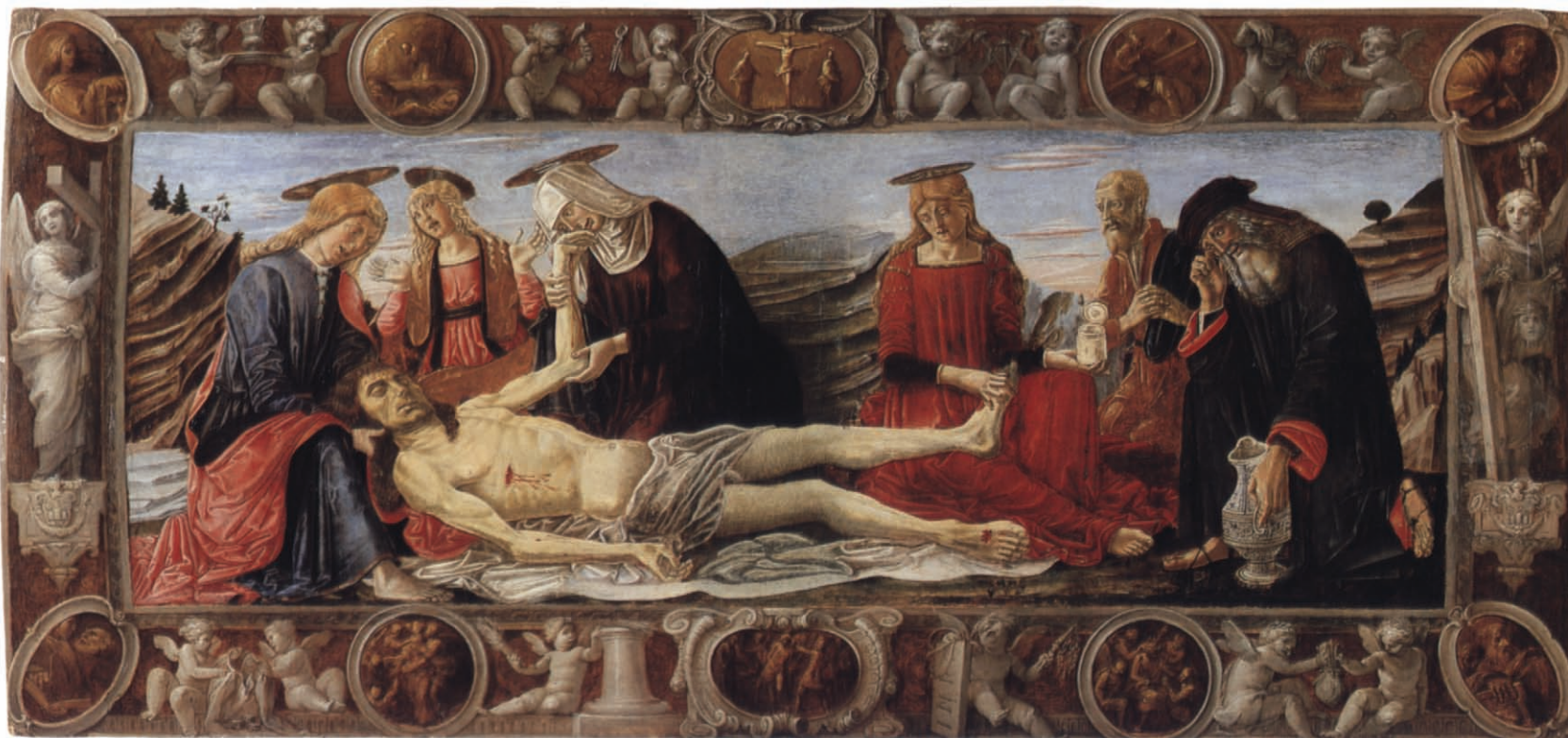
LK



62 d



62 e



63. The Lamentation

Poliarco S.A.

Tempera and gold on wood. 53 × 102 cm.; excluding the painted surround 35 × 80 cm. The panel support of the *Lamentation* has been fitted into a larger panel on which the fictive surround is painted. On the reverse are the del Carpio coat of arms and the inventory number 1165, as well as an old label ascribing the picture to Andrea Mantegna (Bacchi 1987, p. 8).

The body of Christ, blood congealed in the wounds in his hands, feet, and side, lies upon a shroud that extends along the base of the panel. His head is being cradled by Saint John the Evangelist, the Virgin strokes her cheek with the back of his left hand, and Saint Mary Magdalene rubs his left foot, propped on her lap, with ointment. Mary, the mother of James, kneels in the middle distance between the Virgin and Saint John, her hands raised in a gesture of grief, while Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea kneel, weeping, at the right. The scene is set in a barren, rocky landscape.

The *Lamentation*, which has a damage at its center approximately 8 cm. wide extending the full height of the panel, was mounted within a bigger panel sometime in the seventeenth century, enlarging its overall dimen-

sions about 20 cm. in height and width. This addition was painted in grisaille by an as-yet unidentified artist to simulate a "quadro riportato" frame. Oval medallions of the four Evangelists fill the corners, while oval scenes of the Crucifixion and the Flagellation, in elaborate sculptural surrounds, occupy the centers of the top and bottom margins, respectively. Four circular medallions showing the Agony in the Garden, the Arrest of Christ, the Crowning with Thorns, and the via Crucis complete the narrative decoration of the borders along the top and bottom; the intervals between the medallions are filled with putti bearing symbols of the Passion, including the dice and the seamless robe, the column kept in Santa Prassede, Rome, and the scourge, the *titulus* of the cross, the crown of thorns, a gauntlet, the three nails, and the hammer and tongs. The lateral borders are occupied by full-length figures of angels standing on consoles decorated with an unidentified coat of arms: three mountains surmounted by three roses. The angel at the left carries the cross; the angel at the right, holding Veronica's veil, supports the ladder, the lance, and the reed with the sponge soaked in vinegar.

The reverse of the panel bears the coat of arms of Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán, Duke of Carpio, Spanish ambassador to Rome from 1677 to 1683, and viceroy of Naples from 1683 to 1687. The number 1165 alongside these arms refers to the inventory of the duke's collection drawn up November 17, 1687. It has been inferred (Bacchi 1987, p. 8) that the picture was acquired by de Haro in Naples, since it does not appear in the inventory of 1682, compiled on the occasion of the ambassador's departure from Rome. The intermittent alliances between Siena and Naples throughout the fifteenth century and the patronage of Sienese artists, from 1468 on, by Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, son of King Ferdinand of Naples, may imply that the complex to which the present panel belonged could have been a Neapolitan commission.

The compositional format of this *Lamentation* is unique in Benvenuto's career—and, indeed, in all of Sienese Quattrocento painting—and it is difficult, therefore, to be certain what function the picture originally served. The grain of the wood panel itself runs horizontally, and the painting is about the size of a center panel from a large predella. No other predella, however, employs figures as big as these, occupying the full height of the picture field despite being seated or kneeling on the ground. The only comparable treatment of the subject is to be found in the lunette of Girolamo di Benvenuto's altarpiece of the Madonna of the Snow, signed and dated 1508, now in the Siena Pinacoteca. Girolamo's panel may be assumed to be a direct quotation from the present painting, providing a *terminus ante quem* for its ex-

ecution but no points of reference for determining its original function. It is too small to have been the lunette to a conventional altarpiece, and its composition implies that its current rectangular shape has not been altered. Girolamo's lunette does supply a clue to explain the curious damage sustained by the panel along its center, where it seems likely that the shaft of the cross once appeared, but was effaced.

The approximate date of this painting is less difficult to determine, and can probably be situated in the 1490s. Bacchi (1987, p. 8) properly compared it to the Washington Passion predella, concluding that it was a slightly more mature work, although he believed that both predated the Siena *Ascension* of 1491. The *Lamentation* shares with the *Ascension* altarpiece many of its oddities of figural proportions and its crystalline faceting of drapery folds, but in 1491 Benvenuto had not yet translated these idiosyncracies to his small-scale works. By 1500, however, in paintings such as *Hercules at the Crossroads* in the Franchetti Collection at the Ca' d'Oro in Venice, or the *Crucifixion* in the Palazzo Barberini, Rome, Benvenuto had evolved a small-scale equivalent for the eccentric, abstracted forms and emotions of his large-scale narratives, and it is somewhere within his development during that decade that the present painting should be placed. Both the Ca' d'Oro and Palazzo Barberini panels are commonly attributed to Benvenuto's son, Girolamo, but, like the *Lamentation*, they are fully autograph examples, of the highest quality, of Benvenuto's last style.

LK

FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO

(Francesco Maurizio di Giorgio Martino Pollaiuolo)

1439–1501/2

The outstanding artistic personality in Siena in the second half of the fifteenth century, Francesco di Giorgio was equally accomplished as a painter, sculptor, architect, military engineer, and diplomat, and his services were in constant demand in centers as far from the normal sphere of Sienese influence as Milan, Urbino, and Naples. He is commonly assumed to have been a pupil of Vecchietta, but it is likely that he received his initial training either in the workshop of Sano di Pietro—whose compositions, figure types, palette, and punchwork motifs he borrowed for his earliest *Madonna and Child* paintings (in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, and the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore)—or in that of the sculptor Antonio Federighi. Francesco's first securely datable works are both documented to the year 1464: *The Triumph of Chastity*, a cassone panel in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu (Fredericksen 1969, pp. 17–22), and a life-sized polychrome wood figure of Saint John the Baptist, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena (Carli 1949, pp. 33–37). Only three other paintings by Francesco can be precisely dated on documentary grounds: a *biccherna* cover of 1468; the monumental altarpiece of the Coronation of the Virgin painted in 1471–72 for the monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore; and an altarpiece of the Nativity painted in 1475 for the Olivetan monastery at Porta Tufo outside Siena (both altarpieces are now in the Siena Pinacoteca). No other sculptures by Francesco are datable with certainty prior to 1475, when he may already have entered the employ of Duke Federico da Montefeltro in Urbino; he took up residence in the duchy by November 8, 1477. Federico's court was one of the most enlightened and cultured in Europe, and it made a deep impression on Francesco and, through him, on such Sienese contemporaries as Pietro Orioli (see Angelini 1982, pp. 30–43). Francesco served the duke and his successor as architect, engineer, and sculptor, and his treatise on architecture, which he dedicated to Federico, was undertaken at this time.

From 1475 until his death in December 1501 or January 1502, Francesco lived only intermittently in Siena, and his talents were mostly dedicated to architecture, engineering, and sporadic sculptural tasks. Nonetheless, there are a few commissions for paintings from this period, including one for an altarpiece of the Nativity in the church of San Domenico, Siena, and for the fresco decoration of the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino—both dating to about 1490. These works manifest an interest in perspective and in the vocabulary of ancient and Florentine art only hinted at in his earlier production. Yet, the outstanding portion of his surviving paintings was produced in the first part of his career, from about 1460 to 1475, and has been the subject of a wide range of opinions and disagreement over matters of attribution, chronology, and interpretation, largely centering around his professional relationship to two slightly younger contemporaries—Neroccio de'Landi and Liberale da Verona—and the influence they are supposed to have exercised over him.

About 1469, Neroccio and Francesco di Giorgio, who may have been related by marriage, entered into a partnership, which was legally dissolved in 1475. Liberale da Verona was engaged as a manuscript illuminator at Monte Oliveto Maggiore while Francesco was at work there on his altarpiece of the Coronation of the Virgin. It is not easy to interpret their precise interrelationships, but both of these younger painters likely owed more to Francesco's influence than he to theirs. A further matter that has received

insufficient attention is the relation of Francesco's paintings to the sculptural reliefs of Donatello, who resided in Siena between 1457 and 1459. Once again, the outlines of this relationship are unclear, even though the impact of Donatello's late, dramatically charged style, and of his investigation of a pictorial space defined less by perspective than by the figural content, can scarcely be doubted.

64. The Triumph of Chaste Love

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 41 × 45.4 cm.; painted surface 39.4 × 43.8 cm. The horizontally grained panel has been thinned and cradled. A vertical strip approximately 3 cm. wide at the left is modern, as is the area to the right of an arc drawn from the tip of the baldachin of the cart through the wings and bodies of the two griffins pulling the cart. All of the maidens accompanying the cart, except the leftmost figure, are original. The gilt cart has been strengthened with powdered gold and its decorations reinforced; the wheels have been repainted.

This panel is a fragment cut from the left side of a cassone front. A similar panel, undoubtedly from the right side of the same cassone, is in the Egidio Tosatti collection, Genoa. It represents a Triumph similar to that in the present panel, although proceeding in the opposite direction, and with swans rather than griffins pulling the triumphal cart. Both panels have been altered to a semicircular shape, raising the possibility that the complete cassone originally resembled an example by Liberale da Verona in the Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona, showing two contrasting Triumphs within oval picture fields surrounded by *pastiglia* garlands, and, in the center, a pair of *pastiglia* amorini supporting a shield charged with a coat of arms in a circular field. The cropping of the heads of the leading pair of griffins in the Metropolitan Museum's panel, however, and the presence of an archer among the maidens in the Tosatti panel imply, instead, that the semicircular borders are later mutilations, and that, as was customary with Sienese painted cassoni, the picture field was originally continuous.

Several cassone panels from Francesco di Giorgio's workshop repeat, with slight variations, the compositions of these two fragments and suggest the probable form of the completed panel. All of them feature two triumphal carts approaching each other from opposite ends of the panel—the one on the left drawn by griffins, and that on the right by swans—although the architecture of the carts and the baldachins varies in each case. In all of these panels, the figure in the cart at the right supports a shield charged with a coat of arms. No such shield ap-

pears in the Tosatti fragment. In two cassone fronts (in the Carminati collection, Milan, and in a private collection in Crans-sur-Sierre; see Toledano 1987, nos. 25, 26), the maidens attending both carts are singing, another group in the center is dancing around a tree at the foot of which are a pool and a little brook, while four more maidens shoot arrows at a circular wreath hanging in the tree. In the Carminati panel a peacock perches on the triumphal cart at the left. In the panel in Crans-sur-Sierre two angels (?) watch the scene from one of the hills in the background. Another, heavily restored cassone front bearing the coat of arms of the Spannocchi family (Museo Stibbert, Florence: no. 317; see Toledano 1987, no. 29) is very much like these two, except that no wreath is hung on the tree: The archers simply shoot into the air. In two further cassone fronts (also in the Museo Stibbert: nos. 4098, 12922; see Toledano 1987, nos. 27, 28), the central dancing group and the archers have been replaced with a hunting scene. To the left and right of a small rocky hill, groups of maidens fell two stags with spears and arrows, while two more maidens present the head of a stag to the woman riding in the cart at the left. Notwithstanding this change in subject, one of these last two panels (no. 12922) retains the tree, pool, and brook in the center of the composition, although they no longer serve any narrative function. It must therefore be assumed that they bear some symbolic significance.

The subjects of these six cassoni are obviously closely related, and have been described broadly as a "psychomachia"; they are not exact illustrations of any known text. The two triumphal carts would represent Chaste or Spiritual Love (left) and Carnal Love (right), in symbolic conflict with each other. The imagery of the cart drawn by griffins as the representation of Chastity or Spirituality may be deduced from Dante's description of the Triumph of Beatrice (*Purgatory*, cantos XXIX–XXXI), made more specific by the inclusion in the Carminati panel of a peacock—the symbol of marital fidelity. In the two cassoni showing a stag hunt, "Beatrice" may be conflated with Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt and the traditional personification of Chastity. Yet, given the conspicuous repetition of details—such as the tree and pool, the griffins, and the swans—in each of the six panels, it is



probable that there was a specific textual source behind their imagery that today is either lost or has not yet been identified.

The survival of these six closely related cassoni (the existence of others like them must be presumed) suggests that at least one important aspect of Francesco di Giorgio's artistic production was strictly commercial, and that he must have operated as the head of a well-organized shop equipped to satisfy the demand for objects of this nature. The cassoni vary widely in technique and quality and seem to have been produced over a period of time probably ranging from the mid-1460s to about 1475. Of the six discussed above, it is likely that Francesco personally worked on only two, or perhaps three: The Metropolitan Museum/Tosatti fragments and the Carminati front (the panel in the reserves of the Museo Stibbert seems to be of comparable quality, but extensive repaints make such a judgment difficult); both of these must have been painted about the time of the *biccherna* cover dated 1468, with the Carminati panel probably slightly the later of the two. Of the other nine or so known cassoni attributable to Francesco di Giorgio, only the two scenes of Joseph (in the Siena Pinacoteca), the fragmentary *Rape of Helen* in the Berenson Collection, and the *Triumph of Chastity* in the J. Paul Getty Museum are demonstrably autograph, and these are undoubtedly among the artist's earliest works. Others are of conspicuously high quality, and it may be that they were painted by Francesco di Giorgio's partner, Neroccio de'Landi, some of whose early works they resemble. Whether or not Neroccio may be held responsible for any of these panels, they must all refer to designs by Francesco di Giorgio, as must two little-known cassoni produced about 1460 for the Spannocchi family, with gilt stucco reliefs of scenes of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (?) and of an unidentified battle (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, and the Erzherzog Rainer Museum, Brno).

Francesco di Giorgio's seems to have been the only workshop in Siena to employ such an efficiently organized production technique, including the use of molds for stucco relief decorations that could be repeated on different chests (paralleling Sano di Pietro's creation of reproducible cartoons for devotional paintings of the Madonna and Child). Francesco's success appears to have been such that even Liberale da Verona received commissions through him to paint cassone panels (see cat. 57 a, b, 58). Although other Sienese artists painted cassone panels as long as the vogue for such things lasted—from about 1460 to about 1490—none was prolific in this vein, and none employed assistants to produce them. Examples are known by Cozzarelli (cat. 51), Matteo di Giovanni (John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art), Benvenuto di Giovanni (Siena Pinacoteca, no. 217; The Detroit Institute of Arts; the

Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio), Pietro di Domenico (the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Scotland), and perhaps Vecchietta (the *Susanna and the Elders* generally attributed to Francesco di Giorgio, in the Siena Pinacoteca). Francesco's mode of production was continued by Neroccio after the two artists dissolved their partnership in 1475, but not for the creation of painted cassone panels, only one pair of which is independently attributable to Neroccio (North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh). Rather, Neroccio seems to have applied the principles learned in Francesco's shop to the dissemination of devotional images of the Madonna and Child (see cat. 69–71)—both paintings and polychrome stucco reliefs.

LK

Francesco di Giorgio



Figure 1. Francesco di Giorgio. *The Triumph of Carnal Love*. Collection Egidio Tosatti, Genoa



65 a. God the Father Surrounded by Angels

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Tempera and gold on wood. At some point prior to 1897 the panel was separated from the *Nativity* (cat. 65 b) and adapted to an oval format. This was accomplished by cutting the lower corners to match the curve of the top. The two resulting triangular sections were salvaged and reincorporated along the bottom to fill out the oval shape. In 1988 the painting was cleaned, and the pieces disassembled and then recomposed as a lunette. The painted surface of the largest fragment, with God the Father and angels, measures 32.3 × 51.6 cm. at its maximum extension; painted surface 31.1 × 49.2 cm. The part with the stable is 16 × 4.4 cm.; painted surface 12.9 × 3.8 cm. The piece with sky is 16.4 × 4.2 cm., painted surface 11.5 × 3.5 cm. In general, the condition is excellent, with the original egg-white glaze—grayish in color—preserved in many places. However, the pale blue of the sky, done in an oily medium, is not original.

65 b. The Nativity

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 52.6 × 60 cm.; original paint surface 52.1 × 57.2 cm. The panel has been cut at the top through the crest of the right-hand hill and the hair of the Virgin. There are remnants of the original, lipped edge on the other three sides. A new panel, 10.2 cm. wide, had been joined to the top of the original panel to obtain a convincingly complete composition; this has been removed to enable a reconstruction of the picture. The surface is abraded throughout.

These two panels were identified by Zeri (1964, pp. 41–44) as fragments of a single painting. They are reunited here as a complete composition for the first time since their separation sometime prior to 1897 (the illustration shows the panels mounted together after cleaning and disassembly). The picture, with its arched top, would have served as a small altarpiece for a chapel or domestic setting. Like Francesco di Giorgio's related miniature in Chiusi (cat. 66) and a small *Nativity* at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the composition departs from Sienese tradition, in which the holy figures are invariably shown in front of a cave (see cat. 25, 35, 43). Here, the stable has been built among ruins, the naked Christ Child reclines on the hem of the Virgin's ermine-lined cloak, and the figures are set on a plateau, behind which is a distant view of a river valley. These features have precedents in Florentine and North Italian painting.

Shapley (1966, pp. 153–54, and 1979, p. 190) compared the design of the Washington fragment, which she analyzed with the aid of radiographs, to the upper portion of Francesco di Giorgio's great *Coronation of the Virgin* altar-

piece, painted in 1471–72 for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (now in the Siena Pinacoteca), in which the exceptionally dense composition is articulated in terms of actively posed figures moving through an almost palpable space. Given the close correspondence between the two pictures—one that extends to figure types and palette—the *Nativity* is likely to date to about the year 1471 or 1472.

At the time that he painted the *Nativity* and the *Coronation of the Virgin*, Francesco di Giorgio was modifying the conservative palette and structure of his early pictures under the impetus of his contact with Girolamo da Cremona, newly arrived in Siena, and with Liberale da Verona, whose eccentric decorative style was similarly maturing at precisely this moment. The fantastical rock formation at the left of the New York panel, the brittle figure types, and the bright, metallic palette of both fragments seem to depend on the example of Liberale and, through him, Girolamo. By contrast, in Francesco's earlier *Nativity* in Atlanta, he uses a soft, almost pastel

Francesco di Giorgio



Figure 1. Francesco di Giorgio. *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

palette, simplified landscape forms, and a figure canon more reminiscent of Sano di Pietro than of the North Italian miniaturists.

The close relationship of the New York/Washington *Nativity* to Liberale's work is underscored by the correspondence between the two nude angels immediately below and flanking the figure of God the Father in the *Nativity* and two similar angels in an illumination of Liberale's in one of the choir books for Monte Oliveto Maggiore (codex A, f. 4 r, in the Museo della Cattedrale, Chiusi: see Neerman 1982, p. 280). However, whether this particular motif actually originates with Liberale is another matter, for the work of the North Italian miniaturist only partly explains the new direction in Francesco di Giorgio's work.

A number of the most remarkable features in both the New York/Washington *Nativity* and the *Coronation of the Virgin* stem, instead, from Francesco's interest in sculpture. Indeed, in the *Coronation of the Virgin* the angels and seraphim who support the disk-like podium on which the Virgin kneels forecast Francesco's two bronze, candle-bearing putti commissioned for the cathedral in 1489. The closest analogy for the athletic angels in the Washington lunette, who swim through the clouds and around the heavenly Host in audaciously foreshortened poses, occurs in Vecchietta's exactly contemporary bronze relief of the *Resurrection*, dated 1472, in The Frick Collection. It is likely that both derive from a work by Donatello, possibly carried out during his sojourn in Siena in 1457–59. Francesco's interest in Donatello's sculpture is manifest in his polychrome statue of Saint John the Baptist of 1464 and in his later bronze reliefs in Perugia and in Venice, but it is in the lunette of the *Nativity* that Francesco first applied the low-relief style (*relievo schiacciato*) of Donatello to his own paintings.

A small number of other paintings that betray the same incipient change must date from this very moment in Francesco's career, shortly after 1470: the illuminations in the manuscript *De Animalibus* (Museo Aurelio Castelli at the Church of the Osservanza outside Siena),¹ and three paintings of the Madonna and Child (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano; and formerly, Thurn-und-Taxis collection, Duino, Italy). With these works in mind, it is worth reconsidering two sets of small narrative paintings universally attributed in postwar scholarship to Neroccio—the *Saint Bernardino* predella in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, and two scenes from the Life of Saint Catherine of Siena, in the Berenson Collection, Villa I Tatti, and formerly, Waddington Galleries, London (see Coor 1961, pp. 22–25). The palette and the figure types in the New York/Washington *Nativity* and those in the two Saint Catherine scenes are closely analogous. Conceivably, the two scenes formed part of the predella to the *Coronation of the Vir-*

gin altarpiece from Monte Oliveto Maggiore, which was painted for the chapel of Saint Sebastian and Saint Catherine of Siena in the monastery church.

LK

1. The date commonly adduced for this manuscript—1463—is derived from an inscription in the book's explicit. This date refers only to the calligrapher's completion of the text; Francesco di Giorgio's illuminations cannot significantly predate the Washington/New York *Nativity* or the Monte Oliveto Maggiore *Coronation*.

66. Antiphonary

Museo della Cattedrale, Chiusi (codex B)

Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum. The Antiphonary, which contains responses for Christmas Vespers up to the feast of the Circumcision, consists of 116 folios, each 58.8 × 42.7 cm. The pagination is later in date; the binding, of wood covered in leather, with brass fittings, is original, and measures 61 × 44.4 × 8 cm. In addition to the initial on f. 3 v (18 × 18 cm.) catalogued here, the codex has many decorated letters and margins, and four additional historiated initials, all about 18 × 18 cm. (these are by a different hand): f. 29 r (*The Stoning of Saint Stephen*), f. 52 r (*Saint John the Evangelist*), f. 74 v (*The Judgment of Solomon*), and f. 100 r (*The Circumcision of Christ*). For a full description of the contents, see Neerman (1982, pp. 269–83).

The text, "Hodie nobis coelorum Rex de Virgine nasci . . .," is a response for Christmas Vespers. Within the letter *H*, formed of a foliate column embraced by a winged dragon against a gold ground, is a deep mountainous landscape with a naturalistic blue sky. The Christ Child lies naked in the foreground, propped against a white pillow, while the Virgin kneels before him in adoration. Saint Joseph is seated at the left, his head resting in his left hand. Behind these three figures, the ox and ass nibble at some hay in a manger beneath a thatched roof supported on rough-cut poles against the face of a rocky cliff.

This illumination is one of a series decorating a set of twenty-two books commissioned for the monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore by Francesco Righieri of Bologna during his second term as abbot general (1455–59). According to a contemporary chronicle (reprinted in Lugano 1903, pp. 39ff.), the books were all written by Fra Alessandro da Sesto Milanese (documented from 1449–1503) during his first four-year stay at Monte Oliveto, between 1456 and 1460. At the time of the Napoleonic suppressions, all twenty-two books became the property of the bishop of Pienza, who donated them (less one missing volume) to the cathedral of Chiusi in 1810.



The illuminations in these volumes are by several different artists. The *Nativity* in codex B (f. 3 v), which was first recognized by Perkins (1929, p. 219) as the work of Francesco di Giorgio, is the only one that can securely be attributed to him. Weller (1943, pp. 61–62) proposed a date for it between 1458 and 1461, which was deduced from a schedule of payments made to the Florentine illuminator Lorenzo Rosselli, to whom Weller attributed the other miniatures in the same book; the date has subsequently been accepted by most scholars (see Toledano 1987, pp. 37–38, for a bibliography). Together with an illumination in the codex *De Animalibus* (Museo Aurelio Castelli at the Church of the Osservanza near Siena), which is presumed to have been painted in 1463—the date inscribed in the explicit to that codex—the *Nativity* has always been regarded as Francesco's first “documented” work and adduced in discussions of his earliest painting style.

Two objections to this theory have been raised. Zeri and Gardner (1980, p. 12) suggested that the composition of this *Nativity* and that of a related panel in the Metropolitan Museum (cat. 65 a, b) were derived from a *Nativity* (now in the Yale University Art Gallery) that he ascribed to Girolamo da Cremona and which, in consequence, would have been painted after Girolamo's arrival in Siena in 1470 (for a convincing alternative attribution to Liberale da Verona, see Eberhardt 1983, pp. 219–20, n. 253). Earlier, Toesca (1930, p. 114) had proposed attributing the other miniatures in codex B not to Lorenzo Rosselli, but to Venturino Mercati da Milano—an attribution confirmed recently by Neerman (1982, pp. 269–83). According to records, Venturino was at Monte Oliveto in 1472 and 1473,¹ and Francesco di Giorgio himself was documented working for Monte Oliveto Maggiore between 1471 and 1474 (see Toledano 1987, p. 156). Although no notices specifically referring to the illuminations in codex B are preserved, on circumstantial grounds the balance of probability is that the *Nativity* was painted in 1472 or 1473.

Such a revised dating for the Chiusi *Nativity*—over a decade later than has traditionally been supposed—implies a fundamental reconsideration of Francesco di Giorgio's development as a painter. His treatment of the landscape background in this scene, as well as in his small *Annunciation* in the Siena Pinacoteca and in his versions of the *Madonna and Child* in Siena (Pinacoteca, no. 288) and in Avignon (Musée du Petit Palais)—all three of which were probably painted in 1473 or 1474—owes a singular debt to the Mantegnesque realism of Girolamo da Cremona. Earlier, he had exploited a more decorative conception of landscape, with schematically rendered vegetation and a less deep space—as in the small *Nativity* in the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and in the cassone panel of *The Triumph of Chastity*,

datable to 1464, in the J. Paul Getty Museum, or that of *Joseph Sold by His Brethren* in Siena. The figure types, too, have undergone a transformation from those in his earlier works, becoming less attenuated, yet with more finely cut features and carefully modeled bone structure—again possibly reflecting close study of Girolamo da Cremona's models.

LK

1. Borghesi and Banchi 1898, p. 211, believed that a reference of January 24, 1467, to a “giovane lombardo” at Monte Oliveto Maggiore related to Venturino da Milano—a suggestion that was supported by Neerman. Eberhardt (1983, p. 221, n. 254) points out that the first unequivocal mention of Venturino's presence at Monte Oliveto is of January 11, 1472, and he convincingly applies the 1467 reference to Liberale da Verona.

67. The Death of Virginia

Private collection

Tempera on wood. 38.7 × 114 cm.

The story of Virginia is recounted by Livy (3:44–58) and by Valerius Maximus (6:1) as an example of the triumph of Virtue over Corruption, or of Chastity over Lust. A Roman decemvir, Appius Claudius, desired Virginia, the virgin daughter of a centurion, and plotted to abduct her by granting to a fellow conspirator a false claim to her as a slave. Virginia's fiancé objected to Appius's judgment in favor of the false witness, but Virginia's father prevented the scheme of the decemvir more drastically by stabbing his daughter before she could be defiled by the tyrant.

Seated at the left, beneath a marble canopy supported on Corinthian columns, is Appius Claudius, with his fellow conspirator beside him. Groups of soldiers occupy the courtyard in front of them, while the pink and gray temples, towers, and walls of Rome fill the background. In the center of the panel Virginia is being stabbed by her implacable father, while to her left Virginia's fiancé is being restrained by a Roman soldier who menaces him with a dagger. Outside the walls of the city, at the right, is a fisherman seated alongside the banks of the Tiber.

This is one of a number of painted cassone panels produced in the workshop of Francesco di Giorgio in the 1460s and early 1470s. They may be grouped into two categories: those with allegorical representations of the conflict of Chaste and Carnal Love (cat. 64), and those with stories drawn from biblical or classical literature. In the latter category may be listed: (1) the *Story of Joseph* (Siena Pinacoteca); (2) *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London); (3) the *Rape of Helen* (Berenson Collection, Villa I Tatti); (4) the *Judgment of Paris*, and the *Rape of Helen* (?) (J. Paul Getty



Museum, Malibu); (5) the *Story of Coriolanus* (Private collection, Milan); (6) the *Meeting of Dido and Aeneas* (Portland Art Museum, Oregon); (7) the *Story of Tuccia* (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond); (8) the *Story of Claudia Quinta* (Bellini collection, Florence), and (9) the present panel. The last three are closely related by their classical subjects as paeans to Chastity, but to judge from their style they do not seem to have formed part of a single suite of chests.

Although none of the cassone panels in this second group duplicates another in subject—as is the case with the first group—they seem to have been produced according to the same organized workshop system, and few of them may be regarded as autograph paintings by Francesco di Giorgio. The finest in quality, and the nearest in technique to Francesco's other small-scale narrative panels are the two scenes with Joseph, in Siena (probably the earliest in the series, painted about or before 1464), the fragmentary *Rape of Helen* in the Berenson Collection, and the *Death of Virginia* (among the later pictures in the series, probably painted after 1472, given its similarity to Liberale da Verona's *Tobias* cassone, formerly in Kansas City). A number of the others are hardly of lesser quality than these, but in style and technique more closely resemble the early works of Francesco's partner Neroccio de'Landi, and it may be that the younger artist largely directed the production of these panels within the workshop. Thus, the marked resemblance between Neroccio's *Saint Sebastian* predella in Pienza (seemingly an early work, and certainly not part of the Montisi altarpiece of 1496 to which it was formerly attached) and the Portland *Dido and Aeneas*, for example,

may not be fortuitous. The collaborative relationship between Neroccio de'Landi and Francesco di Giorgio before the dissolution of their partnership in 1475 was clearly more complicated than has traditionally been assumed, and may have corresponded in certain essentials to the association of Sano di Pietro with the Master of the Osservanza earlier in the century.

LK

68. Design for a Wall Monument

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Robert Lehman Collection

Pen and brown ink with wash and blue gouache on
vellum. 18.4 × 19.4 cm.

Inscribed (at the lower left): *Franc[esc]o Francia*; (faintly,
on the cartouche): *Franc[esc]o/Francia Bolognese*

Seen half-length within a circular frame viewed from below, the central male figure is dressed in secular garb with a *cappuccio* over his shoulder, his hands joined in prayer or adoration, and his gaze directed down and to the right. He is supported on either side by a female attendant seated on the lower edge of the circular frame. Each of these attendants holds a book and also gazes down and to the right. The circular frame is treated as a carved marble ring, its depth indicated by a row of coffering visible above the heads of the figures. The lower edge is interrupted by a blank cartouche, or *tabula ansata*, clearly intended to contain an inscription, most likely an



68

epitaph. The background behind the figures is painted blue.

The design of this monument is a direct reference by Francesco di Giorgio to Donatello's altar in the chapel of San Callisto in the cathedral of Siena, completed in 1458 (Herzner 1971, pp. 161–86). The surviving fragment of this altar, now installed on the exterior of the cathedral above the Porta del Perdono, shows the Ma-

donna and Child seated within a marble ring that recedes illusionistically into depth in precisely the same manner as the frame in Francesco's drawing. Donatello emphasized the grandeur and presence of the Madonna by enlarging her in relation to the size of the surround, allowing her head and halo to project above the upper edge of the frame, and by crowding the heads of four attendant cherubs into the background—notionally, be-

hind the back edge of the frame. In Francesco di Giorgio's composition, the central figure is entirely contained within the circle of the frame and does not overlap its edges at any point. Visual emphasis is placed upon his prominence within the bracketing gestures of the two attendant figures rather than upon his size and presence. Unlike Donatello's relief, these figures appear in front of the forward plane of the circular frame.

The purpose for which this drawing was made is not known, since there is no exact precedent for its subject. Philip Pouncey (quoted in Bean and Stampfle 1965, pp. 23–24) suggested it may represent a design for an illusionistic wall painting, "to be placed rather high on a chapel wall opposite a painting of the Madonna and Child of the donor's benefaction." Clearly, the finished monument, whether it was intended to be sculptural or a trompe-l'oeil painting, was meant to be set high on the side wall of a chapel, given the perspectival recession of the frame and the gaze of all three figures to the right. Probably, the direction of their glances was not designed to refer to a comparable roundel on the wall opposite, but was conceived in relation to the chapel's altarpiece, since the figures also look downward. Two very similar roundels—containing Sibyls, however, rather than the figure of a donor—were frescoed in grisaille by Luca Signorelli beneath the vaults on the lateral walls of the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino (of about 1489–93; see cat. 74), possibly based on designs by Francesco di Giorgio, who was responsible for the monochrome narrative frescoes below. Perhaps it is not coincidental that, in the *Birth of the Virgin* fresco on the left wall of the chapel, Francesco di Giorgio introduced panels of local color (blue and yellow) into the monochromatic architectural setting, somewhat like his treatment of the background in the present drawing. It is tempting to view this drawing as part of a preliminary plan by Francesco di Giorgio for the decoration of the chapel, subsequently rejected in favor of the frescoes actually painted by Signorelli. In such a case, the central figure could be identified as the powerful Antonio Bichi, and the drawing dated shortly after 1487, when Bichi acquired rights to the chapel.

If the drawing is not to be related to Francesco di Giorgio's project for the decoration of the Bichi Chapel, it may reflect the design for a sculpted cenotaph commissioned by a Siennese, Neapolitan, or Urbinate humanist. Portraits of the donor shown alive do not seem to have been considered appropriate for tomb sculpture in the fifteenth century, although there was a strong tradition for such representations on cenotaphs—as is perhaps best exemplified by Verrocchio's monument to Cardinal Forteguerra in Pistoia Cathedral. Closer to Francesco di Giorgio's direct sphere of experience is the example of the monument (formerly in San Francesco, Siena) erected by Pius II in memory of his parents, in which busts of

the deceased in shell niches portray them as alive and in an attitude of prayer, undoubtedly oriented toward an image of the Madonna and Child elsewhere in the chapel. Filippo Brunelleschi was honored with a cenotaph in the cathedral of Florence carved by his adopted heir, Buggiano, which in form is very like Francesco's drawing; it shows the great architect in half-length, as if alive, within a circular marble frame, although without attendant figures of Virtues or Muses. It may be assumed that Francesco di Giorgio, who occupied a position of importance within the Siennese Republic comparable to, or greater than, that enjoyed by Brunelleschi in Florence, was intimately familiar with this monument, even before his summons in 1491 to supply a design for the cathedral façade—the only non-Florentine architect invited to participate in the competition for this prestigious commission.

Discussions of the dating of the Lehman drawing (for a summary, see Szabo 1983, no. 14) have mostly centered around its presumed resemblance to the illustrations in an engineering manuscript by Francesco di Giorgio preserved in the British Museum, London (Popham and Pouncey 1950, pp. 32–38). The manuscript, which bears a fragmentary dedication to Federico da Montefeltro as Duke of Urbino, has convincingly been dated between 1474, when Federico was named duke by Sixtus IV, and 1482, the date of Federico's death. The few figure drawings included in this manuscript are fully consistent in style with Francesco's illuminations in the codex *De Animalibus* in the Museo Aurelio Castelli at the Church of the Osservanza outside Siena, and a date for both works in the 1470s is likely.¹ By contrast, the figures in the Lehman drawing share the rounder proportions and less wiry and nervous line employed by Francesco in his later works—notably, the altarpiece of the Nativity in San Domenico, Siena, probably painted in the second half of the 1480s, and the monochrome frescoes of 1489–93 in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino. During this period Francesco was regularly employed in Urbino and in Naples as well as in Siena, and in 1490 he was brought to Milan as a consultant on the construction of a dome for the cathedral. An unpublished document referred to by Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri (1894, p. 371) suggests that Francesco was also in Bologna in 1490: Two inscriptions on the Lehman drawing attributing the sheet to "Franc[esc]o Francia Bolognese" may imply an Emilian provenance, and perhaps a dating to that year.

LK

1. Pouncey's suggestion (Popham and Pouncey 1950, p. 37) that the British Museum manuscript very likely dates prior to Francesco's employment at the court of Urbino, and therefore shortly after 1474, but not later than 1477, seems well-founded. Such a dating brings it still closer chronologically to the *De Animalibus* illuminations, with which the British Museum drawings must be all but contemporary.

NEROCCIO DE' LANDI

(Neroccio di Bartolomeo de' Landi)

1447–1500

As with most Sienese artists born in the middle years of the fifteenth century, Neroccio is commonly supposed to have received his initial training, both as a painter and a sculptor, in the studio of Vecchietta. He is first mentioned as an artist in a document of 1468, at about which time or shortly after he seems to have entered into a partnership with his older contemporary Francesco di Giorgio. This association was dissolved in 1475. Whatever Neroccio's initial training and artistic orientation, the definitive influences on his mature style were those of Francesco di Giorgio, with some of whose paintings his early works are still confused, and Liberale da Verona, with whom he and Francesco must have worked in the first half of the 1470s. Out of the combined examples of these two painters, Neroccio developed an elegant and delicate figure style and a pale and soft palette, which he exploited with little variation in works of consistently high quality during the last quarter of the fifteenth century.

Neroccio's activity as a painter centered on the production of devotional images of the Madonna and Child, much as had Sano di Pietro's in the third quarter of the century, but without Sano's calculated commercial success or his apparent pietistic sincerity. Despite the existence of several dated works from 1476 to 1496, it is not always easy to unravel a pattern of development in Neroccio's career, with the result that there is little agreement over the dating and significance of many of his pictures. Neroccio's style was also easily and efficiently imparted to assistants, at least four of whom are known by name: Mariotto da Volterra,¹ Giovanni di Taldo,² Giovanni Battista di Bartolomeo Alberti, and Girolamo del Pacchia. These assistants must have been occupied primarily with the production of polychrome stucco reliefs of the Madonna and cassone panels based on Neroccio's designs, but they also may be credited with having painted a number of devotional images of the Madonna and Child with Saints that, today, are associated with Neroccio's name. The two panels included here are, however, entirely autograph, and establish a standard against which the larger output of Neroccio's studio should be judged.

1. Mariotto da Volterra is recorded in a document of February 28, 1485, as Neroccio's "gharzone," and as receiving payment for a fresco of the Madonna and Child in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. It is unclear whether he is the same artist as the "Mariotti Andree de Vulteris" who signed an altarpiece of the Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter, Andrew, Francis, and the Blessed Gerard of Villamagna in 1484 (Berenson 1930), which does not at all resemble the Palazzo Pubblico fresco, also of 1484. Mariotto di Andrea may be credited as well with a *Madonna and Child* in the Museo Bardini, Florence (see Scalia and de Benedictis 1984, no. 23: as a follower of Pacchiarotto).

2. On October 11, 1481, Giovanni di Taldo, as a "gharzone di Neroccio," received payment for a miniature in the cathedral choir

books representing "Nostro Signore quando ando a passione co la crocie in collo al Monte Chalvario" (Milanesi 1854, II, p. 386). On January 25, 1483, described this time as "dipentore" in his own right (Milanesi 1854, II, p. 387), he received further payments for miniatures. In style, the *Via Crucis* of 1481 strongly resembles Neroccio's predella in the Uffizi of three scenes from the Life of Saint Bernard, on which Giovanni di Taldo may have collaborated and which must in any event be nearly contemporary with the miniature. As has already been suggested by Jacobsen (1908, pp. 8, 83) but rejected by all subsequent scholarship, this predella is likely to be the surviving fragment of an altarpiece commissioned from Neroccio in 1481 by Fra Giannino de' Bernardi, abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Sesto di Moriano near Lucca.



69. Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alexandria

Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena

Tempera and gold on wood. 75 × 62 cm.

Considering the widespread popularity in fourteenth-century Siennese painting of images of the Virgin nursing the Christ Child, it is surprising that this very poetic picture should be one of the few fifteenth-century devo-

tional paintings of the subject (the theme was treated by Francesco di Giorgio in a picture formerly in the Castelli Mignanelli collection, Rome). It may be that Neroccio was consciously evoking an earlier prototype, such as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Madonna del Latte* in the Seminario, Siena (see Meiss 1951, pp. 146–54).

Dressed in a red robe and a blue cloak, the Virgin holds the Christ Child to her breast and looks out toward the viewer. She is seated on a gilt faldstool, one

arm of which is just visible at the lower edge of the panel, and her knees are drawn up at the front of the picture plane. Behind her, at the left, stands the heavily bearded figure of Saint John the Baptist, wearing a hair shirt and holding a banderole inscribed ECC[^E AGNUS DEI]. In the right background is the bust-length figure of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a crown and a transparent veil covering her blond hair. She holds a palm branch and a small spiked wheel—the symbols of her martyrdom. The upper margin of the gold ground is decorated with a punched and engraved border of overlapping disks and a foliate garland. The halos of the three larger figures are tooled into the gold ground, while the Christ Child, silhouetted against the figure of his mother, has no halo.

Although he is documented as an artist as early as 1468, Neroccio's first dated work—the *Madonna and Child with Saints Michael and Bernardino*, a triptych in the Siena Pinacoteca—was painted in 1476, shortly after the dissolution of his partnership with Francesco di Giorgio. Reconstructing his activity prior to this date is at best only conjectural, while opinions concerning his development afterward are confused by the lack of comparable securely dated paintings from before 1492. Thus, for example, the Norton Simon *Madonna* has been dated about 1480 (*Duveen Pictures in . . . America*, 1941, no. 120), to the middle or late 1480s (Brandi 1949, p. 271), and to shortly after 1492 (Coor 1961, p. 83).

This disagreement is symptomatic of a fundamental lack of appreciation for Neroccio's deliberately repetitive style, and in this particular case is in part due to a misunderstanding of the picture's condition. Gertrude Coor exaggerated its worn state and saw in its execution the participation of one of Neroccio's assistants. Although many paintings attributed to Neroccio were, in fact, largely painted by his assistants, the Norton Simon *Madonna* is fully autograph, and seems to date to just after the 1476 triptych in Siena, to which it relates closely in its drawing, modeling, punchwork decoration, and figure types.

In its broadest outlines, the composition of the Norton Simon *Madonna* depends on the example of Francesco di Giorgio, who first experimented with depicting the Christ Child lying across the Madonna's knees (in paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano, and the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon). Characteristically, Neroccio suppressed the ample surrounding space employed by Francesco, pivoting the Virgin to a frontal position and containing the Child entirely within her silhouette, as in a nearly contemporary *Madonna and Child* formerly in Cracow (Coor 1961, fig. 33) and a slightly earlier painting in the Siena Pinacoteca (Coor 1961, fig. 29). The Norton Simon *Madonna* further exploits Francesco's example by borrowing the figure type of the Baptist from Francesco's polychrome

wood statue carved for the Compagnia di San Giovanni Battista della Morte in 1464. Similar figure types were used by Neroccio in two paintings of the Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene, one formerly in the Stoclet collection, Brussels (Coor 1961, fig. 43), and the other in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht (Coor 1961, fig. 40). The Utrecht *Madonna* may have been painted in Neroccio's studio about 1480 by Giovanni di Taldo, and may provide a *terminus ante quem* for the apparently earlier *Madonna* in the Norton Simon Museum.

LK

70. Madonna and Child

The Art Institute of Chicago

Tempera and gold on stucco. 57 × 37.5 cm. The stucco squeeze, modeled in low relief, preserves indications of its original edge at the right and may be presumed to be complete. The frame, although certainly old and possibly contemporary with the relief, is not original and has been cut to its present size. A crack extending the width of the relief at the level of the Child's chin and the Madonna's shoulder was apparently caused by nails driven into the stucco to attach the frame. The crack had earlier been filled and overpainted, and does not appear in older photographs of the relief (see Coor 1961, fig. 38). The gilding of the halos and the painted landscape background, presently obscured by layers of dirt and varnish, are original, but both figures have been heavily overpainted, possibly in the seventeenth century. The present pale blue of the Virgin's mantle is thickly brushed over the original pigment, blunting the modeling of the folds in the fabric. The red of her dress is more thinly applied and has flaked extensively, revealing the original, darker color underneath as well as remnants of the mordant gilding decoration on her cuffs and collar. The features of both figures have been reinforced, especially the Virgin's lips, which were altered to a much fuller form than that revealed by visible traces of the original pigment, while the line of her transparent veil as it falls along her neck and over her left shoulder has been improperly painted yellow to resemble a stray lock of hair.

This is one of only two known sculptural compositions of the Madonna and Child that may be attributed to Neroccio's workshop, although it is likely that these represent the surviving evidence of a much more prolific activity. This relief is a unique example, while the other is recorded in five replicas: two in stucco (Museo d'Arte della Maremma, Grosseto, and Museo Bardini, Florence), two in *cartapesta* (The Art Museum, Princeton University, and Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin—now destroyed), and one in wood (Perkins Collection, Sacro Convento, Assisi). All are polychrome, and were con-



ceived as three-dimensional paintings. This is especially evident in the Chicago relief, in which the depth of modeling is no greater at the bottom, where the Virgin's draperies are cropped by the frame, than it is at the top of her halo, and there is no suggestion of the sculptural mass of

the figures resting on the carved ledge. In this respect Neroccio differs from his Sienese predecessors Antonio Federighi, the so-called Piccolomini Master, and Francesco di Giorgio. Francesco's experiments at modeling the Madonna and Child in relief are recorded in two exam-

ples: a stucco relief in Berlin showing the Madonna and Child seated on a cloud of putti with three more putti holding a garland overhead (see Schottmüller 1913, p. 65, who ascribed it to a follower of Donatello), and a marble relief, also in Berlin (Schottmüller 1913, p. 103), which is reproduced in stucco squeezes in Berlin and in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Both were inspired by related compositions by Donatello.

The existence of these stucco reliefs raises certain questions about Neroccio's studio practice. It has been assumed, without discussion, that the stucco reliefs were executed by assistants after lost originals that Neroccio presumably would have carved in marble—as seems to have been the case with Francesco di Giorgio's relief in Berlin—or modeled in terra-cotta. The relief known through five replicas was clearly intended from the first to be reproduced. Its surface modeling was simplified and all complicated postures that might obscure contours in squeezes taken from the mold were eliminated. Differences from one version to another were planned to be entirely a function of added detail—either painted or molded—which in each case was to be applied by one of Neroccio's assistants. The Berlin version was provided with a surround that added some four inches to the width of the relief, which possibly was intended to have a painted landscape background. The version in Grosseto, which was similarly expanded at the sides and at the top, was enlivened by the application of five cherub heads cast from a piece mold, and by painted figures of Saints Mary Magdalene (or Helena ?) and Jerome.¹ In some of his *Madonna* paintings (see, for example, Coor 1961, fig. 64–66, 83–86) Neroccio followed the same practice of planning compositions specifically for replication. A *cartapesta* mirror frame in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, was probably also conceived by Neroccio in a purely commercial sense as a design that could be duplicated.

By contrast, the Chicago relief is modeled with a subtlety of contour and a delicacy of surface that perhaps argues against its having been designed for replication—notwithstanding its execution in stucco. Detail in this relief is not additive, but is inherent in the forms, especially in the ripples and folds of the Virgin's draperies and in the rolls of flesh of the Child's legs and arms, which give the impression of having been modeled directly rather than squeezed from a terra-cotta mold. Solely on the grounds of technical proficiency and style there is no reason to consider the Chicago relief as anything but a fully autograph work by Neroccio and thus essentially different from the other *Madonna and Child* reliefs credited to his workshop.

The Chicago relief has been dated close to 1475 (Weller 1943, p. 97), at the end of Neroccio's professional association with Francesco di Giorgio and contemporary with

the probable date of his other relief, and also about 1480 (Coor 1961, p. 63), the date of a *biccherna* cover painted by Neroccio. However, it is unlikely that it was planned or executed much earlier than the Montisi altarpiece of 1496—that is, at the very end of Neroccio's career. The open pose of the Christ Child is generically related to the pose of the Child in an early *Madonna and Child* formerly in the Czartoryski Collection, Muzeum Narodowe, Cracow, but the angular attenuation characteristic of Neroccio's figures at that date (see cat. 69) is entirely missing in the relief. The fleshier, more rounded forms are only to be found among Neroccio's paintings of the last decade of the fifteenth century—specifically those works deriving in whole or in part from the Montisi altarpiece. The Chicago relief very likely is almost exactly contemporary with the *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene* (cat. 71), which may be referred to as a basis for reconstructing the original polychromy of the sculpture.

LK

1. The use of such piece molds was common in the manufacture of cassoni, and a practice to which Neroccio was undoubtedly introduced during his association with Francesco di Giorgio. On a number of painted and gilt stucco cassoni from Francesco's shop, possibly executed with Neroccio's assistance, such molds were used for the end figures in armor supporting escutcheons. There are four of these chests: in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (bearing the coats of arms of the Spannocchi and Piccolomini); the Museo Artistico Industriale, Rome (with the arms of the Orlandini and Ugurgieri; see Schubring 1915, no. 51, pl. IX); formerly in the Figdor collection, Vienna (Schubring 1915, no. 63, pl. X); and in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence (Schubring, supplement, 1923, no. 895, pl. I). A chest apparently produced as a companion to the Gardner cassone, in the Erzherzog Rainer Museum, Brno (Schubring 1923, no. 897, pl. II), contains escutcheon-bearing figures pressed from a different mold. Two painted cassoni from Francesco di Giorgio's shop, in the Museo Stibbert, Florence (no. 4098), and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, also employ as heraldic endpieces stucco figures supporting shields, again squeezed from the same molds, although it is unclear if the present reworked surface of the London chest covers original stucco figures or if these are modern restorations perhaps cast from the Stibbert cassone.

71. *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene*

Poliarco, S.A.

Tempera and gold on wood. 62 × 42.5 cm.

Comparison of this very late work by Neroccio with the slightly earlier *Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome and a Female Saint* by Pietro Orioli (cat. 72) illustrates two different trends in Sienese painting at the end of the fifteenth century—trends that had earlier been exemplified by the contrast between devotional images of the



Madonna and Child by Sano di Pietro and by Matteo di Giovanni. Within the strict limitations of this conventional format, Orioli emphasizes the spatial content of his picture, casting the light from the side to accentuate the modeling of volumes. Neroccio's painting, conversely, is conceived as an image in low relief. The Madonna's arms and the arms and legs of the Child are arranged parallel to the picture plane; the background figures are crowded close to those in the foreground, and are not differentiated from them in scale; the lighting is generalized, serving more as a decorative element in the patterned alternation of colors than as an agent to define volumes; and the directional thrust of gestures and glances is side to side rather than forward and back. It would, however, be a mistake to view these differences as progressive on the one hand and *retardataire* on the other: They are complementary strains of Sienese art that can be traced back to the Lorenzetti brothers and to Simone Martini, and their continued vitality accounts, in part, for the endless fascination with variety within the essentially conservative Sienese tradition.

The *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene* must be situated at the very end of Neroccio's career (Bacchi 1987, p. 6, dates it to the 1490s), after the signed and dated altarpiece of 1496 in Montisi. Along with a small number of paintings by the artist, including

a *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene* in the Clowes Collection in Indianapolis (Coor 1961, no. 23), and a much-damaged and only partly autograph *Madonna and Child with Saints Michael and Bernardino* in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Zeri and Gardner 1980, p. 56), this picture favors a stockier and more smoothly modeled figure type than is usual in Neroccio's earlier works, and relies on a generally darker palette than is customary with him. Both characteristics have been explained by the possible influence of Luca Signorelli's Bichi altarpiece (cat. 74), and they relate the present panel most closely to two pictures that may be Neroccio's last surviving works, painted in or just shortly before 1500, the year of his death: a *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome* in the Fondazione Guido Cagnola in Gazzada di Varese (Coor 1961, no. 21) and another *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene*, this one in the Fondazione Horne, Florence (Coor 1961, no. 15). These pictures bear more than a passing resemblance to some of the later creations of Neroccio's pupil Girolamo del Pacchia (1477–after 1533), and may reflect the presence of the younger artist in Neroccio's studio in the last few years of the fifteenth century.

The picture was first exhibited at Colnaghi, London, in 1984.

LK

PIETRO ORIOLI

(Pietro di Francesco degli Orioli)

1458–1496

Perhaps the most important recent contribution to the study of Sienese painting of the fifteenth century has been the rediscovery of the artistic personality of Pietro Orioli. In two successive articles, Angelini (1982) was able to demonstrate that the entire body of paintings heretofore attributed to Giacomo Pacchiarotto (1474–1540), and traditionally considered charming but *retardataire* efforts from the first third of the sixteenth century, is instead by Pietro Orioli. All of these works are now properly regarded as among the most original and influential pictures produced in Siena in the last two decades of the fifteenth century. This fundamental revision of accepted scholarship carries with it significant implications for a variety of problems relating to other artists of the period—notably, Guidoccio Cozzarelli and Pietro di Domenico, but also painters of the stature of Francesco di Giorgio, the Griselda Master, and Luca Signorelli.

Born in 1458, Pietro Orioli must have been trained in the workshop of Matteo di Giovanni, since what appear to be his earliest works, an altarpiece of the Madonna and Child, with Saints John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and Sebastian, in Buonconvento, and a *Nativity, with Saints Bernardino and Anthony of Padua* in Massa Marittima, rely heavily on that artist's figure style and compositions of the 1470s. A probable date for these paintings—and hence, for the beginnings of Orioli's independent career—may be deduced from a hitherto unattributed *biccherna* cover of 1483 in the Archivio di Stato, Siena (see Borgia et al. 1984, pp. 184–85), certainly painted by the same hand and at approximately the same time. These pictures display a precocious fascination with, and command of, perspective and architectural detail more developed than that of any of Orioli's Sienese contemporaries, including Francesco di Giorgio. Amounting nearly to an obsession in his later works, this singular interest is conceivably due to Orioli's acquaintance (through Matteo di Giovanni?) with Piero della Francesca in Borgo Sansepolcro or Bartolomeo della Gatta in Arezzo, as much as to any awareness of contemporary developments in Florence. The culmination of these painted architectural experiments, which must have influenced the young Baldassare Peruzzi, is to be seen in Orioli's fresco *Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles* (1489), in the Baptistry, in his architectural view (1492) in the Sala della Pace of the Palazzo Pubblico, and in his additions (1490–93) to Francesco di Giorgio's monochrome frescoes in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino.

Documents reveal Orioli to have been a highly devout man and an active member of the Compagnia di San Girolamo from at least 1481 to his death in 1496. He was apparently admired by his contemporaries both for the sanctity of his life and for his artistic talents, and his premature death was noted and lamented in an elaborate eulogy in the history of Siena by Sigismondo Tizio (IV, f. 428; see Milanese 1854, II, p. 391). All of Orioli's surviving works save the *Sulpitia* in Baltimore, which is part of a famous series of paintings of Heroes and Heroines of antiquity made for the double Spannocchi wedding of 1493, are of religious subjects. An unusual number of these, like the example shown here, are small works for private devotion, and include a figure of Saint Jerome, undoubtedly painted for one of Orioli's fellow confraternity members.



72. Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome and a Female Saint (Aurea ?)

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 70.5 × 50.8 cm. The panel has not been thinned.

The Virgin, shown in half-length, supports the naked Christ Child with her left hand and reaches with her right to touch the fruit that he holds before him. The Child looks up at his mother and gestures toward her face with his right hand. Behind the Virgin, at the left, stands Saint Jerome, wrapped in a red robe that leaves his chest bared, and at the right is a female saint dressed in red holding a morning star—undoubtedly the instrument of her torture or martyrdom. The morning star is not a standard attribute of any known saint, but a flail with three lashes does distinguish Saint Aurea, and it may be she who is portrayed here. Aurea seems to be a saint of particularly Siennese devotion, appearing in the right wing of a triptych by Duccio in the National Gallery, London; in the central panel of a reliquary triptych by Lippo Vanni in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; and in the central panel of another of Lippo Vanni's triptychs, whose wings show scenes from her life, in the church of Santi Domenico e Sisto, Rome.

Since its exhibition in the "Mostra d'arte antica senese" in 1904 (no. 9, lent by the Palmieri-Nuti collection), this painting has been considered a characteristic work of Giacomo Pacchiarotto; accordingly, it must now be recognized as one of Pietro Orioli's many half-length compositions of the Madonna that include Saint Jerome. While relying entirely on a traditional compositional format, it clearly evinces Orioli's distinctive blending of the figure styles of Matteo di Giovanni and Francesco di Giorgio into a new, fully original statement. The elegant arabesques of the Virgin's draperies; the soft, even lighting; the clear, bright palette; and the full, rounded modeling of the figures are all characteristics of the works of Orioli's maturity from the mid-1480s on. It is difficult to pinpoint a marked stylistic development in Orioli's career after his initial close dependence on Matteo di Giovanni, but this *Madonna* closely resembles certain figures in his fresco of 1489 in the Baptistery, and his additions to the frescoes by Francesco di Giorgio of 1490–93, in Sant'Agostino. A date of about 1490 is probable.

Two other paintings of the Madonna and Child reuse the cartoon employed in the present picture; both seem to be slightly later replicas. In one, formerly in the Dan Fellows Platt collection, Englewood, New Jersey, and now in the San Diego Museum of Art, the Madonna and Child are set, with no accompanying figures, against a gold ground. The execution of this painting is somewhat coarse, although to what extent that impression may be

due to damage or repainting is not clear, and the figures are slightly more gaunt and elongated than in the present panel—closer to how they appear in what are probably Orioli's last works, such as the *Coronation of the Virgin* in San Casciano dei Bagni. The second replica (Siena Pinacoteca, no. 388: from the Conservatorio di Santa Maria Maddalena, Siena), certainly by an imitator of Orioli or from his studio, reintroduces the two attendant saints, converting Aurea (?) into the more conventional figure of Mary Magdalene, and is more faithful to the proportions, expressions, and gestures of the figures in the original. This picture was painted by the same artist responsible for a *Nativity, with Saint John the Baptist*, also in the Siena Pinacoteca (no. 299). The Siena *Nativity* is inscribed across the bottom with the name "Suor Barbara Ragnioni," but this inscription, as Torriti (1978, pp. 90–91) and others have pointed out, is probably a later addition, and could never have had any bearing on the name of this anonymous follower of Pietro Orioli.

On the back of the present panel is a red wax seal impressed with the coat of arms of the del Testa Piccolomini, who must be presumed to have been its owners before it passed into the Palmieri-Nuti collection. It may not be coincidental that one of Orioli's patrons in securing the commission to decorate the *biccherna* cover of 1483 was Angelo d'Urbano del Testa Piccolomini, whose arms appear alongside those of the Camerlengo Paulo di Lando Sberghieri (see cat. 51).

LK

73. The Nativity

Private collection

Tempera on wood. 66.5 × 49.5 cm. The panel has not been cut; the unpainted gesso preparation is visible on all sides.

The scene is set beneath a thatched roof supported on four slender poles, with a deep hilly landscape behind. To the left and right of center, the Virgin and Saint Joseph kneel in adoration of the Christ Child, who props himself up on the edge of a saddle, which is inverted and lined with hay to form his cradle. The ass passively eats hay from a wattle manger while the kneeling ox behind Saint Joseph seems to embrace the Christ Child with its outstretched foreleg. Two shepherds, cut off by the lateral edges of the composition, rush forward to adore the Child while, at the far right, two more shepherds may be seen approaching along the road in the middle ground, and on a hilltop farther in the distance there is a ruined ecclesiastical building with sheep grazing around it. The



walls and towers of the city of Bethlehem rise in the middle distance at the left.

Of the several versions of this subject painted by Orioli over the course of his short career, the present panel is probably the latest in date and is in many respects the most original. Its carefully calculated composition, exploiting diagonals to emphasize the movements, gestures, and gazes focused on the figure of the Christ Child, is essentially different from the more insistently planar conceptions of Orioli's Sienese contemporaries or predecessors. His command of spatial recession—suggested both by simple devices such as positioning his figures and compositional elements at an angle to the picture plane, or by the use of architectural perspective and carefully calibrated changes in scale—is far more advanced than even Francesco di Giorgio's (see cat. 65, 66). The raking light, directed across the foreground from the left, casts deep pools of shadow, accentuating the modeling and the impression of solidity and enhancing the emotional impact of the scene. Each figure, silhouetted against a dark area (or if in shadow, against a patch of light in the middle distance), is thus set sharply in relief. Even the landscape is, as it were, backlit, with the middle ground darkened in shadow and the background composed of soft rolling hills and a gentle, light-filled plain.

Orioli's first attempt at depicting the Nativity, an altarpiece in the church of Sant'Agostino in Massa Marittima, more clearly betrays his training with Matteo di Giovanni as well as his admiration for Francesco di Giorgio. That work is remarkable for the verism of its rendering of surface textures and still-life details and for its precocious mastery of architectural perspective, but it is otherwise essentially conservative in conception. Orioli enlivened subsequent versions of the subject—notably, a predella panel formerly on the London art market¹ and an altarpiece in the National Gallery, London—through the introduction of anecdotal detail, such as the protective gesture of the ox, the nonchalant inattention of the ass, or the casual and seemingly disinterested conversation between the attendant saints. The structure of these compositions is tightly controlled by a relentless sense

of geometry, investing Orioli's light palette and graceful, calligraphic draftsmanship with a solemnity they might otherwise lack.

In the *Nativity* shown here this solemnity has become paramount. The figures are thinner, darker, and more severe in expression than in Orioli's earlier works. The conversation of the attending saints has been eliminated in favor of the rapt devotion of two raw-boned shepherds. The Christ Child is no longer Orioli's usual well-fed, jolly infant, but a muscular, doll-sized adult lifting himself athletically from his bed and staring at his mother with an intelligent, attentive gaze. The landscape is deeper and more fully integrated with the composition, and Orioli's characteristically graceful, flowing line has become agitated and nervous, especially in the fine, brittle folds of drapery and the streaks of light cutting across the rocks. In all these respects this *Nativity* most closely resembles, among Orioli's dated works, the *Sulpitia* in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, which was painted as part of the bridal decorations for the double Spannocchi wedding of 1493. A date shortly after this (the *Sulpitia* was likely painted in 1494) and not long before Orioli's premature death in 1496 seems probable.

LK

1. See Zeri 1964–65, pp. 27–28, 79–86. This panel is one of a series of five, including a *Baptism of Christ* and a *Resurrection* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, a *Crucifixion* in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and a *Pentecost* in the Cini Collection, Venice, which have been associated with an altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin, now dispersed among various public and private collections (see Coor 1965, pp. 132 f.; Vertova 1967, pp. 161 f.). It is iconographically more probable that the predella originally belonged to Orioli's altarpiece of the Ascension, in the Siena Pinacoteca (Torriti 1978, pp. 88–89), with which it is stylistically compatible. The *Ascension* altarpiece came to the Pinacoteca from the Basilica of the Osservanza near Siena. Four of the five predella panels were recorded by Romagnoli (about 1835, V, p. 344; reprinted in Bacci 1947, p. 121) in the Villa Piccolomini Bandini, Fagnano: "si vedono quattro tavolette nella principale camera situate, esprimenti il Natale, il Battesimo, la Resurrezione di N.S.G.C. e la venuta dello spirito Santo." These four panels were later together in the Charles Butler collection, London.

LUCA SIGNORELLI

(Luca d'Egidio di Luca di Ventura)

about 1450–1523

Born in Cortona, on the eastern border of Tuscany, Luca Signorelli began his career probably about or just before 1470 as a pupil of Piero della Francesca in nearby Borgo Sansepolcro. It was undoubtedly through Piero that Signorelli was introduced to the circles of patronage in Umbria, the Marches, and the Arretine provinces of Tuscany, which would determine the peripatetic character of his later career, and it may have been in Piero's workshop that he first encountered Pietro Perugino, with whom he seems to have collaborated on commissions in Perugia and Florence in the last half of the 1470s. Signorelli first appears as a recognizably distinct artistic personality working alongside Perugino in the Sistine Chapel in 1481 and 1482. Thereafter, he traveled extensively throughout central Italy, working in Perugia, Spoleto, Fabriano, Loreto, Urbino, Città di Castello, Lucignano, Montepulciano, Pienza, his hometown of Cortona, Siena, Volterra, and at Monte Oliveto Maggiore, before undertaking, between 1499 and 1504, to paint the frescoes of the Last Judgment in the chapel of San Brizio in the cathedral of Orvieto, his masterpiece and arguably one of the greatest surviving works of the Italian Renaissance.

After completing his frescoes in Orvieto in 1504, Signorelli settled more or less permanently in Cortona. His artistic production there continued unabated until his death in 1523, but the power and inventiveness of many of his late works are obscured by extensive intervention from his studio assistants, among whom Girolamo Genga and Luca's nephew Francesco Signorelli may be named. It can safely be said, however, that through the last decade of the fifteenth century, and perhaps until the emergence of Raphael and Michelangelo as the masters of decorative painting in Rome in 1508, Signorelli was the most famous painter in central Italy after Perugino, and, along with him, the most influential. Vasari regarded his work as the culmination of the second period of the rebirth of Italian art: Signorelli opened the way, "with beauty (*grazia*) of invention and arrangement," and above all through his incomparable mastery of the rendering of the nude, to the ultimate perfection of art in the sixteenth century.

THE BICHI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 74)

The course of development of Sienese painting at the turn of the sixteenth century—following the deaths of Francesco di Giorgio (1501/2), Neroccio de'Landi (1500), Pietro Orioli (1496), and Matteo di Giovanni (1495)—was to a large extent determined by several non-Tuscan artists who resided in the city and whose influence younger painters found irresistible: Pietro Perugino, Pinturicchio, Sodoma, and Girolamo Genga. These painters all made their presence felt between 1500 and 1515 (Sodoma remained in Siena until his death in 1549), but Luca Signorelli was already well known there in the early 1490s, and contacts between him and Francesco di Giorgio are

documented as early as 1484. Of the many commissions undertaken by Signorelli in or near Siena—including fresco decorations for Pandolfo Petrucci in the Palazzo del Magnifico (1509); a design for the inlaid pavement in the cathedral (1506) showing the Judgment of Solomon, which, however, was never executed; a cycle of frescoes in the large cloister at Monte Oliveto Maggiore (1498–99) illustrating the Life of Saint Benedict; and altarpieces in Montepulciano, Pienza, and Lucignano earlier in the 1490s—most important for the subsequent history of Sienese painting was an altarpiece in the Bichi Chapel in Sant'Agostino. The altarpiece was disassembled and



Figure 1. Luca Signorelli. The Bichi Altarpiece (scaled reconstruction)

dispersed in the middle of the eighteenth century, and the frescoes in grisaille by Signorelli and Francesco di Giorgio that covered the walls and vaulting of the chapel were whitewashed, making a proper assessment of the full impact of this complex on local artists impossible until only recently.

Recorded in passing by Vasari, Fabio Chigi (1625–26), and Ugurgieri (1649–50), the Bichi altarpiece was described in detail in a manuscript composed by Abate Galgano Bichi about 1720 (reprinted in Vischer 1879, pp. 243–45). Bichi's description enabled Borenius (1913–14) to identify the dispersed fragments of the complex, in-

cluding the panel shown here, then in the collection of E. Stanley at Quantock Lodge, and his reconstruction was subsequently vetted and refined in publications by Rand (1961) and Ingendaay (1979). The altarpiece was in the form of a gilt wood triple-arcaded Tabernacle, the central arcade occupied by a polychrome wood statue of Saint Christopher attributed to Francesco di Giorgio, now in the Louvre. Behind the statue was a painted landscape by Signorelli showing a riverbed and several small-scale figures disrobing; two fragments of this panel, formerly in the Cook collection, Richmond, are now in the Toledo Museum of Art. The lateral panels of the altarpiece,



again by Signorelli, are both preserved, slightly truncated, in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem, and represent, on the left, Saints Catherine of Siena (or Eustochium ?, the name saint of one of the chapel's patrons, Eustochia Bichi), Mary Magdalene, and Jerome, and, on the right, Saints Augustine, Catherine of Alexandria, and Anthony of Padua. Below, were three predella panels representing, on the left, the Feast in the House of Simon (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), the Lamentation over the Dead Christ (Stirling-Maxwell collection, Pollockshaws, Scotland), and the Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown); see fig. 1.

The earliest known reference to the Bichi altarpiece is by Sigismondo Tizio, who claimed, in 1513, that it had been painted fifteen years earlier by Luca Signorelli. Tizio's testimony concerning the dates of Signorelli's activity in Siena has always been accepted as authoritative. Seidel (1984) has recently demonstrated, however, that the decoration of the Bichi Chapel must have been completed no later than 1494, and perhaps was begun as early as 1489. Since Signorelli's contribution includes

two frescoed lunettes and the decoration of the vault—of necessity among the first work undertaken—it is reasonable to assume that he was present in Siena closer to 1489, and that Francesco di Giorgio may have added the wall frescoes and the statue of Saint Christopher independently, and slightly later. As Seidel has pointed out, such an assumption accords well with the style of Signorelli's works about 1490—notably, his fresco (1490) and two dated altarpieces (1491) in Volterra.

The principal stylistic analogy to the Bichi altarpiece is provided by the Belladonna altarpiece in Volterra, inscribed and dated 1491 (see Burrese and Caleca 1981, pp. 24–26, 50–51, 84–90). The disposition of the saints in the two Berlin panels echoes that of the standing and seated figures surrounding the Virgin in the Volterra altarpiece, while the architecture of the vaulted arcades in the Berlin panels closely resembles that in Signorelli's *Annunciation* altarpiece in Volterra, also of 1491. The complicated poses and gestures of the figures in the three predella panels from the Bichi altarpiece—and especially in the Williamstown *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine*—are to be found as well among the figures in the



grisaille relief decorating the platform of the Virgin's throne in the Belladonna altarpiece. These contrapposto stances are somewhat less accentuated in later works by Signorelli, such as the *Pentecost* of 1494 in Urbino. In Signorelli's paintings after 1491, furthermore, he generally did not indulge in the clarity of detail and the crisp handling of color that characterize the panels of the Bichi altarpiece—which, among all of Signorelli's oeuvre, are, in fact, matched for their vibrancy of detail, lighting, composition, color, and anatomy only by his frescoes in the sacristy of the Santuario della Santa Casa in Loreto. The date of the Loreto frescoes, like that of the Bichi altarpiece, is controversial; according to traditional scholarship, they are Signorelli's earliest works. It is not likely, however, that they were painted long before 1490, and they probably date from 1488, when their patron, Cardinal Girolamo Basso della Rovere, Bishop of Loreto, first visited his diocese (see Gianuzzi 1903). The most convincing date for the Bichi altarpiece, therefore, on both historical and stylistic grounds, is 1489 or 1490.

Redating this splendid work nearly a decade earlier than hitherto assumed is of considerable importance for the

study of later Siennese art, and especially for understanding the emergence in the 1490s of the painter known as the Master of the Griselda Legend (cat. 75 a–c)—perhaps the most talented of the last generation of native artists active before the turn of the century. Equally, however, the mature styles of Pietro Orioli, Pietro di Domenico, and Bernardino Fungai are now more easily placed within a plausible chronological framework. Signorelli's influence on subsequent generations of Siennese painters is primarily based on his later works in or near the city. Yet, as late as 1526 the leading painter in Siena, Sodoma, paid Signorelli the discreet tribute of quoting from the Bichi altarpiece. In Sodoma's *Decapitation of Niccolò Tuldo* in the chapel of Saint Catherine in San Domenico, the two executioners, one sheathing his sword and the other holding Tuldo's severed head, are derived from the same two figures, seen from behind, in the Williams-town *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine*.

LK

74. The Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute,
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Tempera, gold, and oil on wood. 29.6 × 92.4 cm. The painting has been transferred. The picture surface appears to have been cropped slightly on all sides.

The martyrdom of Saint Catherine is portrayed in a continuous narrative, comprising two separate episodes, across the width of the panel. At the right, before an extensive landscape of hills and a lake, Saint Catherine kneels in prayer while two angels with swords destroy the four spiked wheels on which she was to be flayed alive, scattering her would-be tormentors on the ground. At the left, before a receding vista of classical façades, the saint is shown decapitated in the midst of a crowd of soldiers, the executioner sheathing his sword while one soldier grasps her head. This scene is framed at the left by the tyrant of Alexandria, seated upon a raised throne, and two of the philosophers confounded by Saint Catherine; two more philosophers debate with one another in the center foreground of the panel. A small group of horsemen, one of whom bears a shield charged with an unidentified coat of arms, and a classical temple set on a hilltop close off the city view at the back. At either end of the picture are truncated bronze candelabra that once divided this scene from its companion panels in the predella to which it belonged.

LK

MASTER OF THE GRISELDA LEGEND

active in the last decade of the XVth century

The Master of the Griselda Legend is named for three panels in the National Gallery, London, relating the story of the Patient Griselda, the last tale in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. These panels have recently been identified as parts of the wedding apparatus commemorating the double marriage of Antonio and Giulio di Ambrogio Spannocchi in 1493 (Tàtrai 1979), together with a famous series of eight panels depicting Heroes and Heroines of antiquity on which the Griselda Master collaborated with Francesco di Giorgio, Neroccio de'Landi, Matteo di Giovanni, and Pietro Orioli. The surviving oeuvre of the Griselda Master is small, comprising, in addition to the Spannocchi panels, the *Faith* (cat. 75 a), a *desco* showing the drunken Bacchus (formerly in the Zoubaloff collection, Florence; see Cinotti 1964, pp. 48–49), and, possibly, two poorly preserved frescoes of angels behind the baptismal font in the church of San Francesco in Grosseto.

In the past, it has been suggested that the Griselda Master was not a Siennese but an Umbrian artist, since the two salient influences on his style were those of Pinturicchio and, above all, Luca Signorelli. It is impossible, however, to accept the proposal either that he can be identified with Bartolomeo della Gatta, who worked alongside Signorelli in the Sistine Chapel (Martini 1960, p. 141, n. 31), or that he was a pupil of Signorelli, employed by him continuously from the time of the Sistine Chapel frescoes (1482) to the end of the fifteenth century (Longhi 1964). The Griselda Master's hand cannot be detected in Signorelli's paintings from the 1480s, and his debt to Signorelli may be imputed entirely to works painted in Siena—specifically, to the Bichi altarpiece (see cat. 74), from which he borrowed the pose of the Poldi-Pezzoli *Artemisia*, as well as the mannerisms, the anatomy, and the drapery style that inform all of his large-scale figures, especially the Grosseto angels. His collaboration with Pietro di Domenico on the Metropolitan Museum's *Three Theological Virtues* (cat. 75 a–c), and with the four leading Siennese painters active in 1493–94 on the Spannocchi Heroes and Heroines, is best explained by the assumption that he was a Siennese painter. The fact that he added the landscape and background figures to Francesco di Giorgio's *Scipio Africanus* in the Carrand Collection at the Bargello (the background of Neroccio's *Claudia Quinta* in Washington is not by the Griselda Master, as has generally been presumed, but by another hand) may imply that he received his initial training in that artist's shop, which could also account for his exposure to Signorelli in the Bichi Chapel. In any event, the few known paintings by the Griselda Master must all postdate work in the Bichi Chapel, and none is likely to have been painted after the turn of the century. Although his identity remains elusive, he must be viewed as the most original Siennese painter of his generation, after Orioli.

PIETRO DI DOMENICO

(Pietro di Domenico Petrini)

1457–1501 (?)

Although a fairly homogeneous and easily recognizable body of work has been assembled around two paintings signed by Pietro di Domenico, a *Nativity with Saints Martin and Galganus* in the Siena Pinacoteca (Torriti 1978, pp. 32–33) and a *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and John the Baptist* in the City Art Gallery, York (J.A.S.I. 1961), it has not yet been possible to arrive at a coherent view of his development as an artistic personality. He was born in 1457 (Padovani and Santi 1981, p. 39), but the year of his death is given variously as 1501, 1503, 1506, up to perhaps 1533. Romagnoli (about 1835, V, pp. 767–71) records that he resided in Siena from 1497 to 1533, but the paucity of Pietro di Domenico's surviving works and the difficulty of dating any of them past the first decade of the sixteenth century make it preferable to identify him with the "Pietro di Domenico dipintore" who entered the Confraternità di San Girolamo in Siena in 1497, and died in 1501 (*pace* Padovani and Santi 1981, p. 40). That he was evidently closely associated with Pietro Orioli—an active, venerated member of the confraternity—and that almost all of his surviving representations of the Madonna and Child include a figure of Saint Jerome may be more than circumstantial evidence to confirm this identification.

Pietro di Domenico's earliest training was probably in the shop of Benvenuto di Giovanni, although, clearly, he admired the work of Francesco di Giorgio and Matteo di Giovanni, and did not hesitate to borrow ideas from them. What are likely to be his earliest paintings—for example, the *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* in The Metropolitan Museum of Art—reveal an idiosyncratic blend of these three painters' styles, although the technique and the selection of figure types are most clearly indebted to Benvenuto. Similarly indebted to Benvenuto is the *Meeting of Jephthah and His Daughter* in the collection of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres in Scotland. Probably about the mid-1480s or toward 1490, Pietro di Domenico fell strongly under the influence of Pietro Orioli and of Luca Signorelli. His York *Madonna* (loosely based on Signorelli's Rospigliosi-Pallavicini *Madonna*), the smaller of his two versions of the *Nativity* in the Siena Pinacoteca (Torriti 1978, pp. 34–35), and the *Assumption and Nativity* in Radicondoli must date from this time. His late paintings—notably, the *Madonna* in Siena and the one in the Crawford collection, and the signed *Nativity* in Siena—probably postdate Orioli's death in 1496. They are measurably less exuberant and eccentric than his earlier works, achieving a graceful, decorative quality that parallels the best contemporary paintings of Bernardino Fungai.

THE THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES (catalogue 75 a–c)

The three panels are examples of a type of interior decoration that flourished in Siena in the later fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century, comprising cycles of virtuous men and women of antiquity or allegorical personifications of the Virtues, portrayed with extensive landscape backgrounds, as if viewed through tall window niches. Vertova (1984) has pointed out that although several representations of the Theological Virtues survive—including a suite by Andrea di Niccolò (a *Fides Retta* by Pietro Orioli, formerly at Julius Böhler in Munich, must have formed part of another such series)—no corresponding depictions of the four Cardinal Virtues are known, and it is unclear whether the present paintings were produced for a sacred or secular setting. They were in all likelihood originally set in a room, at or above eye level, either installed in the wainscoting or as parts of the back or headboard of a large piece of furniture. The present panels, clearly designed to be read as fictive windows, must have been separated from each other by framing elements—very likely, by classical pilasters approximately as wide as the modern frame divisions—allowing for the illusion of a continuous landscape behind the three figures. All three panels retain their original dimensions, and marks of the two horizontal battens that formerly held them together are still apparent on the backs.

These three panels were first recorded early in this century in the Loeser collection in Florence. They were lent to the “Mostra d’arte antica senese” in Siena in 1904 with an attribution to Matteo Balducci, and were later identified by Berenson as the work of the Griselda Master (photograph, Villa I Tatti, Florence). Although this attribution was again advanced by Vertova (1984), it is only in part correct, since all three panels cannot be the product of a single artist; differences in handling among them are too pronounced to be accounted for simply by their varying subjects. The thinly painted landscape backgrounds in the *Hope* and the *Charity*, with their delicate, fern-like trees and flatly silhouetted hills, contrast sharply with the finely detailed, densely rendered landscape behind the *Faith*, in which the trees, rocks, and reflections in the water appear to have been meticulously studied from nature. The flattened poses, schematic draperies, and generalized anatomy in the figures of Hope and of Charity are incompatible with the strong contrapposto, aggressive volumetric draperies, and carefully modeled feet, hands, and brow of Faith. The last corresponds, in all essentials, to the best-preserved figures among the Spannocchi Heroes and Heroines attributed to the Griselda Master, and in particular to the

Artemisia in the Museo Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan, and the *Alexander the Great* in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at Birmingham University (England). There can be no doubt that the *Faith* was designed and painted by the Griselda Master.

The *Hope* and the *Charity* bear no appreciable resemblance to any of the Spannocchi Heroes and Heroines, nor to any other paintings by the Griselda Master. A small panel representing Saint Catherine of Siena in prayer, formerly in the collections of Logan Pearsall-Smith and of J. Seymour Maynard (Vertova 1984, fig. 213), employs the same aqueous landscape and idiosyncratic figure type, with pinched face and hands, as in the *Hope*, but the picture should not, for that reason, be attributed to the Griselda Master, as Vertova and Berenson proposed. Stylistic points of reference for the *Hope* and the *Charity*, as well as for the Maynard *Saint Catherine*, are to be found in the late works of Pietro di Domenico—notably, in his altarpiece of the Assumption, with Saints Sebastian, Thomas, and Gregory (in the Museo d’Arte Sacra, Buonconvento), in which all of the distinctive figure types seen in the present panels reappear, along with the same abbreviated notations for trees and rock formations.

Discrepancies in style and in handling are also apparent between the figures of Hope and Charity, although these are less extreme than among those two and Faith; at the Metropolitan Museum, the panels are currently ascribed to different hands. However, such differences are less a matter of the handling of paint than of the underdrawings of the two panels, visible through infrared reflectographic analysis. The drawing beneath the *Charity* is broad and coarse, executed with a brush and primarily intended to delineate outlines and the general disposition of drapery folds. All hatching and modeling are applied on the surface, in the pigment and the glazes. In the *Hope*, on the other hand, the underdrawing is fine, nervous, and complex, and includes elaborate indications of modeling and shading. The figure’s hair, cap, and scarf are drawn with a calligraphic freedom and sophistication totally at odds with their final schematic rendering in paint (the original design of the scarf is visible to the naked eye beneath the paint surface), and can only be explained if one supposes the image to have been conceived by an artist other than Pietro di Domenico. This artist was undoubtedly the Griselda Master, since the drawing beneath the *Hope* is closely similar to that underlying the *Faith*, which is of an astonishing refinement and complexity.

The circumstances under which Pietro di Domenico and the Griselda Master may have come to collaborate on this project are not clear, since the two artists do not seem to have had any other contacts beyond their shared admiration for Luca Signorelli. The fact that the *Hope* was painted by Pietro di Domenico over a finished draw-

ing by the Griselda Master may imply that the former took over a commission abandoned by the latter. The *Faith* is probably the latest of the few known works by the Griselda Master, certainly postdating the Spannocchi panels of about 1493. A date for the series in the second half of the 1490s is supported by the similarity of the *Hope* and the *Charity* to Pietro di Domenico's altarpiece of the Assumption in the Museo d'Arte Sacra, Buonconvento. The *Hope* and the *Charity* share with that painting and with the Crawford *Madonna* a subdued tone and a resemblance to the mature works of Bernardino Fungai that were conspicuously absent from Pietro di Domenico's supposedly earlier paintings—specifically, those more strongly influenced by Pietro Orioli. They nearly approximate the mood and some of the figure types in what may be Pietro di Domenico's last painting, the *Assumption of the Virgin* fresco in Campansi, which, like the present series, was left incomplete by its originator—in this case, perhaps, on account of the artist's death in 1501 (?).

On the reverse of the panel of *Charity*, in the area between the marks left by the two missing battens, is a drawing in black chalk, now only partially legible, which shows two heroic nudes in poses of exaggerated action, with alternative positions sketched for the heads. Although the purpose of this drawing or even the subject for which it might have been preparatory is indecipherable, its style is unmistakably related to that of Luca Signorelli, and recalls his charcoal sketches on the walls of the chapel of San Brizio in Orvieto Cathedral (see Martindale 1961) or the diminutive nude he painted in the fictive marble decoration of the window jambs in the sacristy of the Santuario della Santa Casa in Loreto (reproduced in Scarpellini 1964, fig. 16). If this drawing on the verso is, indeed, by Signorelli—and it is difficult to imagine another fifteenth-century draftsman with as strong and confident a technique as well as so sure a command of heroic anatomy—it raises interesting questions regarding the commission for these panels and, more importantly, the precise relationship between Signorelli and the Griselda Master.

The drawing is not sufficiently clear to permit a conclusive dating within Luca Signorelli's career. The frescoes in Loreto mentioned above were probably painted about 1488–89, just before Signorelli's arrival in Siena to begin work in the Bichi Chapel, and it is possible, therefore, that the panel on which Pietro di Domenico's *Charity* was later painted was salvaged from the Cortonese master's effects when he left Siena in the very early 1490s. The charcoal drawings that appear in the area of the sky in the *Resurrection of the Dead* fresco in Orvieto are among the earliest examples of his work there—probably dating from the spring of 1500, closer in time to the *Three Theological Virtues*. Signorelli was in Siena in

1498 and 1499, when he was engaged at Monte Oliveto Maggiore on the frescoes of the Life of Saint Benedict, and the still faintly legible figure style employed in this drawing corresponds in many respects not only to some of the scenes that he painted at Monte Oliveto, but even more so to his altarpiece of the Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, also of 1498, in Città di Castello. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Signorelli would have been in at least casual contact with the Griselda Master at this time, and some such association may be the best explanation for the appearance of this drawing on the back of one of the panels of the *Three Theological Virtues*.

LK

75 a. Faith

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 74 × 45.4 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, retains its original dimensions and thickness.

The full-length figure of Faith is identified by the cross in her right hand and by the chalice, above which hovers a sacramental wafer, that she holds in her left. Glancing upward as if toward divine inspiration, she stands on a grassy hilltop; a river landscape recedes into space behind her at the left. In the right foreground is a little dog—a symbol of fidelity (*fidelitas*) that is frequently conflated with Faith (*fides*), as Vertova (1984) has shown. Francesco di Giorgio introduced the dog symbolically in his painting of *Faith* now in the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena. In a later engraving by Gaspare Reverendino, Faith holds a cross and is also accompanied by a dog.

LK

75 b. Charity

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 74 × 45.7 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, retains its original dimensions and thickness.

Charity, partially draped in a red cape that leaves her right breast exposed, stands on a sloping strip of ground before a deep, mountainous landscape with a river or lake winding through the middle distance. She balances a naked infant on her left arm and offers her right index finger to another infant, naked but for a pair of sandals, who reaches up to her. To the right, a short distance behind the main figures, a pelican plucks her breast to feed her young with her own blood—a common symbol both of Piety (referring to the sacrifice of Christ) and of Charity.





*Griselda Master and
Pietro di Domenico*



As with the preceding panel, this representation corresponds to Gaspare Reverendino's engraving of the same subject, which includes the two naked infants as well as the pelican feeding her young.

The poses of the figures seem to have been inspired by that of Rhea Silvia on Jacopo della Quercia's *Fonte Gaia* in the Piazza del Campo (now in the Palazzo Pubblico).

LK

75 c. Hope

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Tempera and gold on wood. 74 × 45.7 cm. The panel, which has a vertical grain, retains its original dimensions and thickness. The surface has suffered considerable paint loss.

Hope, clad in a deep-blue dress that has darkened considerably, stands on the shore before a broad, placid lake, out of which rise jagged rock formations and, in the far distance, a range of mountains. She raises both her hands

in a gesture of adoration, and gazes upward at a radiance descending from the upper left corner of the panel. At her feet is a phoenix, the symbol of Hope, rising whole from the fire consuming its ashes. The underdrawing, which is partly visible to the naked eye and fully visible with the aid of infrared reflectography, is substantially different from the finished painting. In its original conception, the figure's hair was bound in a scarf that fluttered behind her in dramatic looping folds. These folds have been converted to flat ropes of fabric describing a descending series of curves parallel to the picture plane, with no sense of modeling or of foreshortening. Similarly, the phoenix was originally drawn with its wings spread more like those of the pelican in the *Charity*, and with careful attention to the description of the feathers. These changes are due to a difference in authorship between the drawing, attributable to the Griselda Master, and the painting, by Pietro di Domenico (see discussion above). However, the circumstances under which the panel was begun by one artist and taken over by another are not known.

LK

*Griselda Master and
Pietro di Domenico*

BERNARDINO FUNGAI

(Bernardino Cristofano da Fungaia)

1460–1516

The attribution of a fairly large, homogeneous body of work to Bernardino Fungai has been based upon his only signed and dated painting—a *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Sebastian, Jerome, Nicholas of Bari, and Anthony of Padua* of 1512 (formerly in San Niccolò al Carmine and now in the Siena Pinacoteca). These works reveal a painter of an engaging naïveté and technical capacity, if somewhat limited range of invention. All of the paintings securely attributable to Fungai, however, must date from the second half of the artist's documented career; his early activity remains unknown. Fungai is first recorded in 1482 as a pupil of Benvenuto di Giovanni, at work on the frescoes of prophets, judges, and kings on the drum of the cupola of the cathedral in Siena. His contribution to this series has not been isolated, nor have any independent works from this time been identified. A *biccherna* cover of 1484, frequently referred to as Fungai's earliest dated painting, is the work of another artist—the anonymous master responsible for Tabernacle no. 571 in the Siena Pinacoteca.

Fungai is first clearly recognizable as a distinct artistic personality in 1496–97, the date of an altarpiece in the Oratorio di Santa Caterina in Fontebranda, representing the stigmatization of Saint Catherine, a lyrical work fusing an accomplished decorative sensibility with a simple, direct narrative style derived from Pietro Orioli. From about the same time or slightly earlier must date one of Fungai's most beautiful *Madonna and Child* compositions (Tabernacle no. 375 in the Siena Pinacoteca), as well as the works by which he is perhaps most appreciated today: the series of panels illustrating the stories of Hippo (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), Sophonisba (Pushkin Museum, Moscow), and Scipio (The Hermitage, Leningrad; and formerly in the Woodward collection, London). All of these paintings were more strongly influenced by Pietro Orioli than by Benvenuto di Giovanni, Fungai's documented teacher. Closely succeeding them in date is Fungai's acknowledged masterpiece, *The Coronation of the Virgin* of 1498–1501, painted for the high altar of the church of Santa Maria dei Servi in Siena—a large, iconic image of consummate decorative skill, in which the influence of Signorelli's Bichi altarpiece dominates. From that point until his death in 1516, Fungai's handling became increasingly dry and his imagery repetitive, reflecting the ascendant taste in Siena for Umbrian painting in the style of Pinturicchio and of Perugino. The quantity of Fungai's surviving work from this period, of competent but undistinguished quality, has undeservedly compromised his reputation in modern times.

THE PREDELLA OF THE SANTA MARIA DEI SERVI ALTARPIECE (catalogue 76 a–d)

The two scenes from the Life of Saint Clement, now in the City Art Gallery, York, were recognized as long ago as 1932 by Perkins as being among Bernardino Fungai's most engaging narrative panels, probably forming part of the missing predella to his *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece (see fig. 1) on the high altar of Santa Maria dei Servi in Siena. Surprisingly, this suggestion has not received much notice in subsequent scholarship, nor has the patent connection between these two panels and two more in Strasbourg been noticed—notwithstanding their corresponding size, style, and iconography. The Strasbourg panels were first attributed to Fungai by Berenson (1909, p. 173), and were reproduced in the monograph on the artist by Bacci (1947, fig. 4, 5), who retained their traditional identifications as scenes from the Life of Saint Mark. They in fact illustrate episodes from the Life of Saint Clement.

The predella to which these four panels belonged was probably completed by a fifth panel, the same size as the

others, showing Christ as the Man of Sorrows with two angels, which appeared along with the two York pictures at the Tighe sale in London (Sotheby's, July 17, 1929, nos. 21 a, 21 b: The scenes of Saint Clement were bought by Zink; the *Man of Sorrows* was bought by Templeman, and cannot be traced). The predella's association with the Servi *Coronation of the Virgin* can be established primarily on grounds of style, and is supported by the original dedication of the church of the Servi to Saint Clement (Perkins 1932, p. 146). According to Pecci (1752, pp. 89–90), when the church was granted to the Servites as a foundation, they retained the obligation to administer the united parishes of San Clemente and Sant'Angelo a Montone. Of the twelve saints who witness the Coronation of the Virgin in Fungai's altarpiece, two are portrayed as popes. One, whom Perkins believed represented Clement, kneels in the foreground at the left with his tiara before him. However, the dove perched upon his shoulder and whispering in his ear, as well as his being paired with Saint Jerome, who kneels in the same position at the right, identifies this pope as Saint Gregory the Great. The papal saint standing at the far

Bernardino Fungai



Figure 1. Bernardino Fungai. *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Santa Maria dei Servi, Siena

left in the altarpiece, behind Saint Paul, is not distinguished by any personal attributes, and may have been intended to represent Clement.

The documents regarding this altarpiece, published by Bacci (1947, pp. 85–94), make no mention of the identities of the figures included in it, the scenes from the predella, nor the dedication of the altar; they record only that in April 1498, a certain Battista di Pietro Guerrini of Sinalunga endowed the altar in his will, with the stipulation that the altarpiece be completed and installed within three years, and that in August 1501, Bernardino Fungai was still owed 180 of his fee of 325 florins for work on the picture.

LK

76 a. The Conversion of Saint Clement

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg

Tempera on wood (transferred). 41 × 61 cm.

The scene illustrates an episode in the early life of Saint Clement, as recounted in *The Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine. Having lost his father, mother, and two brothers in accidents at sea, Clement dedicated himself to the study of philosophy and particularly to inquiry concerning the immortality of the soul. He attended the preaching of Saint Barnabas in Rome and, along with the other philosophers present, mocked him. Clement posed this question to Barnabas: “‘Since the mosquito is a tiny animal, why does it have six feet, and possess wings, while the elephant, which is a huge beast, has no wings, and only four feet?’” Barnabas answered: ‘Fool, I could answer thy question with the utmost ease, if it appeared that thou didst ask for the purpose of learning the truth. But it were absurd to say aught to you about creatures, since their Maker is unknown to you; for as you know not the Creator, it is but just that you be in error concerning creatures!’” Moved by these words, Clement sought out Saint Peter in Judea, who “further enlightened him concerning the faith of Christ, and clearly proved to him the immortality of the soul.”

In the center of the panel, a hexagonal pergola rises on Corinthian columns above an inlaid marble pavement that stretches from the foreground to a distant vista of the buildings of Rome, among which are the Coliseum and Trajan’s Column. In the right foreground, Saint Barnabas stands behind a raised pulpit, flanked by two acolytes, and gestures toward heaven. Nine philosophers are ranged on a marble bench opposite; one of them, Clement, stands and refutes Barnabas as he points earthward.

The traditional interpretation of this scene as an episode from the Life of Saint Mark presumably confuses it with the story of Saint Peter dictating his gospels to Saint Mark—as illustrated, for example, by Fra Angelico in the predella to the Linaiuoli Tabernacle. The figure preaching from the pulpit is identified as Saint Mark, in the catalogue of the Strasbourg museum (1938, p. 133); his haloed disputant opposite is not identified.

LK

76 b. The Reunion of Saint Clement with His Family

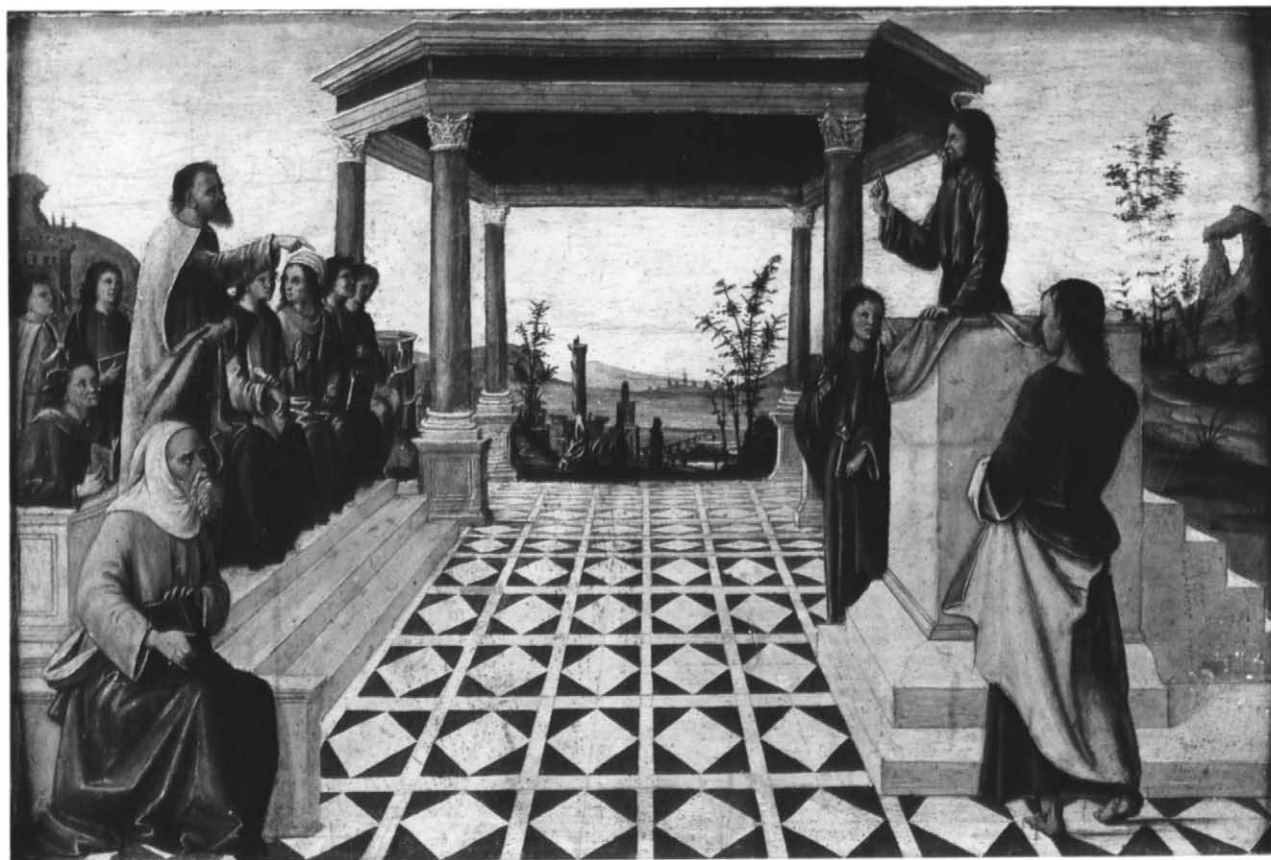
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg

Tempera on wood (transferred). 41 × 61 cm.

While Clement was a disciple of Saint Peter, he told the apostle the story of the loss of his family at sea. When he was still a child, his mother had fled with his two brothers to Athens to avoid the adulterous advances of her husband’s brother, who then falsely denounced her as having eloped with a servant. En route to Athens, their ship was wrecked in a tempest and the mother was separated from her two children. After some years, Clement’s father set out to learn the fate of his wife and children, of whom nothing had been heard since their departure. He, too, never returned. By chance, Peter came across Clement’s mother begging on an island near Athens and, realizing who she was, brought her to Clement. As the two embraced and related their misfortunes, two other disciples of Peter revealed themselves as Clement’s lost brothers, Faustus and Faustinian. The following day, Peter, Clement, Faustus, and Faustinian encountered an elderly philosopher on the road whom they jokingly called Father and with whom they debated the power of prayer. The philosopher held that prayer was powerless to change destiny, as he knew from his own sad experience, and told them the story of the loss of his wife and children. Hearing this, Clement, Faustus, and Faustinian recognized him as their father and reunited him with their mother.

The scene is set before a landscape of rolling hills. Saint Peter, holding a book and his keys of gold and silver, points out Clement to his father, with whom Peter and Clement have been conversing. Behind Clement, at the right, are his brothers, Faustus and Faustinian, and their mother, her hands raised in a gesture of astonishment. Like the previous panel, this scene has traditionally been identified as part of the legend of Saint Mark—possibly Peter dispatching Mark to preach in Aquileia or Alexandria. Neither episode would explain the ancillary figures in the scene, whose number and gestures accord well with the story of Saint Clement.

LK



76 a



76 b



76 c. Saint Clement Striking the Rock

City Art Gallery, York

Tempera and gold on wood. 43.5 × 65 cm.; painted surface 41.5 × 63.5 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain.

Clement was chosen by Peter to be his successor as bishop of Rome but, perceiving the danger of precedent in a pope personally selecting his own successor, he refused the honor, ascending to the papacy only after the elections of Linus and of Cletus. Exiled by Trajan from Rome, Clement was sent to the island of Chersonesus, where he found over two thousand fellow Christians sentenced to labor in the marble quarries. They were forced to walk six miles each day to find drinking water. Clement prayed that he might be shown a well or a spring nearer at hand. Seeing a lamb upon a rock, he understood it to be the sign of an answer to his prayer, where-

upon he struck the rock with a pickax and water gushed forth.

Clement, clothed in a cope and a papal tiara, is shown striking the rock beneath the pointing hoof of the lamb. Water pours out of the cleft in the rock, forming a little pool that is depicted at the bottom of the panel, as several scantily clothed laborers at the right look on. Three unidentified figures stand behind Clement at the left while, in the middle distance, a priest baptizes some of the five hundred people reported to have been converted in a single day upon hearing of Clement's miracle. On the hillside in the distance, two men are cutting a block of stone in the quarry.

LK



76 d. The Martyrdom of Saint Clement

City Art Gallery, York

Tempera and gold on wood. 44 × 65 cm.; painted surface 42 × 63.5 cm. The panel has a horizontal grain.

Three years after the miracle at Chersonesus, Trajan appointed a new governor of the province who ordered Clement's death. Clement was taken aboard the governor's ship and pushed overboard with an anchor tied around his neck. Hearing of his martyrdom, Clement's followers prayed that his body might be shown to them, upon which the sea receded, revealing a marble temple in which lay the body of Clement. According to *The Golden Legend*, "Each year, at the season of his martyrdom, the sea draws back three miles, and leaves a dry road to those that come thither." The panel, one of the most magically evocative in Fungai's career, is domi-

nated by an expanse of water bounded by a sandy shore in the foreground and by blue hills beyond. A large, three-masted ship occupies the center, while other smaller boats may be seen sailing in the distance. Saint Clement, once again clad in cope and tiara, but with an anchor tied to his neck, is being pushed from the deck of the boat by a sailor while others attend to the ship's rigging. Extending out into the lake, in the lower right corner of the panel, is a spit of dry sand terminating in Clement's (diminutive) miraculous shrine, before which tiny monochrome figures march in procession.

The composition of this panel strongly recalls that of an earlier panel by Fungai representing the story of Hippo (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), which similarly shows a figure on a large ship being pushed overboard. The earlier composition is more naturalistically conceived than the present panel, where abrupt shifts in scale among the figures—reflecting not their relative positions in space,

but their importance to the narrative—refer back to fourteenth-century precedents, rather than to any contemporary examples. Similarly, the landscape here has been reduced to the minimum necessary to support the narrative, in contrast to the spatially convincing, expansive setting enlivened with abundant naturalistic detail in *The Story of Hippo*. The overall effect in the present panel is of a scene of fantasy and whimsy not unlike Giovanni di Paolo's *Miracle of Saint Nicholas* in Philadelphia.

LK

77. A Sibyl

Private collection

Tempera and gold on wood. 97 × 43 cm. The panel has not been thinned. The original, lipped edge of the paint surface is intact on all sides.

It is unusual that the identity of this charming figure, undoubtedly once indicated by an inscription on the now-blank tablet held by the putto in the sky at the upper right, is not suggested by any unambiguous attributes. Among similar Sienese paintings of the time, only two series portraying Heroes of antiquity are so treated (extant panels by Girolamo di Benvenuto, formerly in the H. Harris collection; and by a follower of Neroccio, in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston), and these at least distinguish their subjects as antique Heroes by the armor that they wear. Corresponding images of antique Heroines, on the other hand, invariably contain some visual reference to the Virtue the figure is meant to personify. Similarly, allegorical figures are always accompanied by one or more standard symbols embodying the concept they represent (see cat. 75). Of those groups of figures intended to be individually identifiable, only the Prophets and Sibyls are traditionally distinguished from each other solely by an inscription—either a recognizable extract from their writings or simply their names written on a banderole or plaque. Despite the fact that the present figure holds no book, it is highly likely that she represents one of the Sibyls, and formed part of a series possibly numbering as many as ten similar panels.

Only one other panel demonstrably from the same series has hitherto been identified: a standing female figure of equally problematic iconography, in the castle of Pszczyna, Poland. The association of these two panels, which are of exactly the same size and include identical putti supporting blank tablets, and their attribution to Fungai was first proposed by Ragghianti (1963, p. 59), who did not address the question of their subjects. In the catalogue of

an exhibition of Italian paintings held at the Muzeum Narodowe in Cracow (Rozycka-Bryzek 1961, no. 65: as studio of Ghirlandaio), the Pszczyna panel was called an allegory of "scientia beata," referring primarily to the gesture of the female figure toward a sunburst in the sky. In the most recent discussion of these pictures (Vertova 1984, I, pp. 205–9), they are both considered allegories and, while their association in a single series is accepted, the attribution to Fungai of the Pszczyna panel is rejected. However, allowing for its apparently heavily repainted state, there seems no reason to doubt that the panel is, indeed, by Fungai.

Fungai's source for both these figures ultimately refers back to Benvenuto di Giovanni's designs of 1483 for three of the Sibyls in the floor of the cathedral in Siena—a project on which Benvenuto was engaged at a time when Fungai was his documented pupil ("gharzone"). The device of an engraved tablet supported by a winged putto was used by Benvenuto in his Tiburtine Sibyl, while the pose of the Pszczyna figure recalls that of Giovanni di Stefano's Cumaean Sibyl, which Fungai would also have been privileged to watch being inlaid. The present panels do not, however, date to the period of the cathedral inlays, but, rather, recall Fungai's style in the late 1490s. Their rich, decorative sensibility corresponds to that of the Servi high altar (1498–1501), while their landscapes—incorporating a relatively deep space filled with abundant naturalistic detail—parallel in treatment that in the *Saint Catherine* altarpiece of 1496–97. The putti holding the tablets above the two Sibyls are virtual repetitions of those filling the sky above Saint Catherine. A date for the two Sibyls of about 1497 or 1498 seems reasonable.

A proposal that a third panel, in the Fondazione Guido Cagnola in Gazzada di Varese, came from the same series bears serious consideration, although it differs slightly from the other two panels in format. Like them, it represents a Sibyl standing before a deep landscape, on a panel of similar proportions. Its horizon line is significantly higher than that in the other two panels, and the putto in the upper right corner is trumpeting rather than supporting an inscribed tablet. The Cagnola panel was first noted together with the present painting in an English collection, from which the two were sold separately, before 1904, to Guido Cagnola and Charles Loeser.¹ The author of the Cagnola panel is Pietro di Domenico, who based his composition loosely on Neroccio's design for the Hellespontine Sibyl in the cathedral pavement. Like the two paintings by Fungai, it probably dates from the second half of the 1490s, close in time to Pietro's large *Nativity* or to his paintings of the Madonna that are in the Siena Pinacoteca and in the collection of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres in Scotland.

Whether these three panels came from a single complex or not, it is unlikely that they were intended to be

installed in a domestic setting—as would have been the case with any of the better-known series of Heroes and Heroines of antiquity on which they are modeled, such as that painted for the double Spannocchi wedding of 1493. A series of Sibyls would be a more appropriate decoration for a monastic or lay confraternity building, and it is not inconceivable that they may be related in some way to the *Three Theological Virtues* painted by the Griselda Master and Pietro di Domenico (cat. 75 a–c), at about the same date and for a similar context.²

LK

1. Perkins 1914. In publishing these two pictures side by side, Perkins intended only to disprove the attribution to Fungai of the Cagnola *Sibyl*. Nonetheless, he noted their common provenance and remarked on their similarity of conception. Gertrude Coor (manuscript note in the files of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York) proposed their common origin in a single complex. The present panel was lent by Loeser to the Sieneese exhibition of 1904 (no. 72).
2. The *Theological Virtues* are smaller than the Sibyls, and their landscapes are treated in a slightly different fashion, suggesting that they formed part of different, although perhaps obliquely related, cycles. It may, however, be more than mere coincidence that the *Virtues* and the present *Sibyl* all belonged to Charles Loeser (it is not known whether they were purchased by him together or separately), and that Pietro di Domenico worked on both sets of paintings (if, that is, the Cagnola *Sibyl* is part of the same series as the other two).



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INDEX

Numbers in italics refer to pages with illustrations.

A

Agatha, Saint, 158
 Albergati, Niccolò, 54
 Alberti, Giovanni Battista di Bartolomeo, 328
 Alberti, Leon Battista, 14–15, 21, 30, 49, 128
 Alberto da Sarteano, 50
 Alberto di Betto da Assisi, 263
 Albizzeschi, Bernardino; *See* Bernardino, Saint
 Alessandrino, Saint Pietro, 40
 Alexander IV, Pope, 205
 Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, 315
 Alfonso V of Aragon, King of Naples, 22, 168, 193
 Altenburg
 Staatliches Lindenau-Museum
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Crucifixion*, 169, 174–75; 174
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *Saint Augustine*, 95, 97
 Sano di Pietro: *The Assumption of the Virgin*, cat. 18 b; 17, 36, 145–46, 149; 150
 Sano di Pietro: *The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents*, cat. 18 c; 146, 150–51, 267; 151
 Andrea del Castagno, 275
 Andrea di Bartolo, 174, 224
 The Resurrection, 142
 Andrea di Niccolò, 281, 346
 Andrea Vanni, 44, 219, 224
 Fra Angelico, 67, 72, 98, 169, 193, 198, 216, 354
 Annunciation altarpiece [Cortona], 209
 The Last Judgment, 11, 198
 Paradise, 200
 San Marco altarpiece, 203
 de Angelis, Luigi, 305–6, 306*n*
 Ann Arbor
 Museum of Art, University of Michigan
 Sano di Pietro: *The Birth of the Virgin*, cat. 18 a; 36, 146, 148–49; 148
 Ansanus, Saint, 169, 181, 264
 Anthony Abbot, Saint, 37, 64–65, 67, 76, 128*n*, 193, 200; *See also* Master of the Osservanza: Saint Anthony Abbot series
 Antonino, Archbishop, 209
 Fra Antonio da Bologna, 223
 Antonio da Sesto, 54
 Antonio di Giusa, 26
 Apostles' Creed, 194, 196
 Appius Claudius, 324
 Aretino, Spinello, 38, 43

Aringhieri, Alberto, 25, 44, 55–56
 Arte della Lana altarpiece; *See* Sassetta
 Artigiani Tedeschi, 21, 57, 274, 306*n*
 Asciano
 Museo d'Arte Sacra
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Birth of the Virgin*, 5, 72, 80, 99, 124, 126, 136, 149; 124
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *The Nativity*, 5, 10, 91, 95, 124; 10
 Ashburnham, Earl of, 152–53, 272
 Athanasius, Saint, Bishop of Alexandria, 104, 106, 108, 111, 113, 123
 Augustine, Saint, 53, 56, 106, 181, 200, 224, 272, 277–78
 Augustinians, 10, 113, 120, 168–69
 and Giovanni di Paolo, 53–54, 211–12
 and the Observant movement, 52–53, 188

B

Babbott, Frank, 139–40
 Baglioni family, 48, 50, 249
 Balducci, Matteo, 346
 Baltimore
 Walters Art Gallery
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Way to Calvary*, 174; 172
 Barbara of Brandenburg, Marchesa, 286
 Barbo, Ludovico, 54
 Bargagli, Mariano, 44, 45, 212
 Barna da Siena, 35
 Barnaba di Nanni, 34
 Bartoli, Bishop Carlo d'Agnolino, 45, 46
 Bartolo di Fredi, 80, 149, 150, 285
 The Adoration of the Magi, 83; 83
 Madonna of Mercy, 256
 Malavolti altarpiece, 267
 Bartolomeo da Ferrara, 222
 Bartolomeo della Gatta, 335, 344
 Basel
 Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *The Birth of Saint Nicholas of Bari*, cat. 8 a; 95, 97; 96
 Bastiano da Firenze, 45
 Battista di Fruosino, 293
 Beccafumi, Domenico, 23
 Palazzo Pubblico, Sala del Concistoro, frescoes, 58
 The Visitation, 256
 Bellanti, Lucio, 57
 Benedetto da Maiano, 3–4, 230
 Benedetto di Bindo, 63, 67, 69, 217
 Siena Cathedral, sacristy, frescoes, 150–51, 194, 196

Benedictines, 154, 304, 306, 306*n*
 Benvenuto di Giovanni, cat. 60–63; 21, 25, 26, 259, 272, 300–325, 345
 architectural settings, 23, 31*n*
 and Bernardino Fungai, 352, 358
 cassone panels by, 31*n*, 319
 and Girolamo da Cremona, 286, 288, 290
 influence of Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona on, 31*n*, 300, 302, 304
 Works by:
 The Annunciation (San Bernardino, Sinalinga), 23, 300, 302, 304; 23
 The Annunciation (San Girolamo, Volterra), 300, 302, 304
 Ascension altarpiece, 300, 302, 305–6, 311, 315; 306
 biccherna cover, 300, 302, 305
 The Crucifixion (Palazzo Barberini, Rome), 315
 David in Ecstasy, cat. 61 a; 304–5; 303
 Hercules at the Crossroads, 315
 The Initial E, with The Adoration of the Magi, 304
 The Initial G, with The Stigmatization of Saint Francis, 304
 The Lamentation, cat. 63; 314–15; 314
 Madonna and Child, cat. 60; 23, 300, 302; 301
 Miracles of Saint Anthony, 31*n*
 Montepertuso altarpiece, 300, 302, 305
 The Nativity, 304, 307
 Passion predella, cat. 62 a–e; 302, 304–11, 315; 307–310, 312–313
 The Agony in the Garden, cat. 62 a; 304–5, 306–7; 307
 The Crucifixion (Washington), cat. 62 c; 305–6, 311; 310
 The Descent into Limbo, cat. 62 d; 23, 304, 306, 311; 312
 The Resurrection, cat. 62 e; 304–6, 311; 313
 The Way to Calvary, cat. 62 b; 304–6, 308, 311; 308–309
 Psalter, cat. 61 a–c; 302, 304–5, 306; 303, 304
 The Sacrifice of Jephthah, 300
 Saint John the Evangelist, 304
 San Domenico altarpiece, 302, 305–6, 306*n*
 Benvoglianti, Bartolomeo, 34, 56–57
 Benzi, Andrea, 223
 Benzi, Ugo, 50
 Berlin-Dahlem
 Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Crucifixion*, 191; 191

Berlin-Dahlem (*continued*)

- Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Clare Rescuing the Shipwrecked*, 204; 204
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Francis Investing Clare with Her Habit*, 204; 204
 Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony at Mass*, cat. 10 a; 102, 108; 109
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *Madonna and Child, with Saints John the Baptist and Dorothy*, 92; 92
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *A Miracle of Saint Augustine (!)*, 95, 97; 97
 Bernard, Saint, 209
 Bernardino, Saint, 4, 34, 47, 50, 105, 108, 145, 169, 170, 180, 203, 219, 220–21, 242, 265
 death and canonization of, 41–42, 153–54, 164, 166
 and Giovanni di Paolo's *Crucifixion*, 169
 and Marian cult, 36, 52
 popular devotion to, 153–54, 268
 and Sano di Pietro, 11, 138
 and Siena's art and monuments, 26, 34–35, 266
 and Siennese fashions, 4, 296
 as source of inscriptions on Domenico di Bartolo's *Madonna of Humility*, 249
 Berry, Duke of, 4
 Bessarion, Cardinal, 217
 Bettini, Antonio, 54, 57
 Betto di Benedetto, 43
biccherna covers, 3, 40, 99, 219, 300, 302, 305
 Bichi, Alessandro, 58
 Bichi, Antonio, 25, 34, 327
 Bichi Chapel; *See* Siena, Sant'Agostino
 Bichi, Niccolò di Galgano, 47
 Biglia, Andrea, 53, 102
 Bindino da Travale, 76–77
 Biondo, Flavio, 56
 Boccaccio, 40, 344
 Bolgarini, Pietro di Niccolò, 36
 Bologna
 Museo Civico Medievale
 Sano di Pietro: *Antiphony*, cat. 21; 90, 154, 158, 166; 155–157
 Bono da Ferrara, 51
 Borghese, Giovanni, 44
 Borghese, Niccolò, 56–57
 Borgo Sansepolcro
 altarpiece; *See* Sassetta
 Matteo di Giovanni: altarpiece, 264
 Matteo di Giovanni: predella, 279, 281
 Bracciolini, Poggio, 58
 Brancacci, Rainaldo, Cardinal, 17
 Bregno, Andrea, 57
 Bridget of Sweden, Saint, 224, 235, 259, 261
 Brooklyn Museum
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *Madonna and Child with Cherubim*, cat. 7; 95; 94
 Sano di Pietro: *Madonna of Humility*, cat. 15; 139, 141; 140
 Brunelleschi, Filippo, 6, 7, 15, 215, 250, 266, 268, 327
 Bruni, Leonardo, 40, 55–56

- Budapest
 Museum of Fine Arts
 Sassetta: *Saint Thomas Aquinas in Prayer*, cat. 1 b; 21, 71–72, 77, 95, 127; 70
 Bulgarini, Bartolomeo, 10, 149
The Nativity, 4
 Buontalenti, Bernardo, 254
 Butler, Charles, 283, 339
 Buzzichelli, Giovanni di Francesco, 13–14, 47–48, 256

C

- Caffarini, Tommaso d'Antonio, 168, 222–24, 231
 Cambridge, England
 Fitzwilliam Museum
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Bartholomew, The Entombment of the Virgin, and the Mourning Virgin*, cat. 33 b; 200; 202
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Burial of Saint Monica and Saint Augustine Departing for Africa*, cat. 9 a; 100, 102; 101
 Pellegrino di Mariano: *The Creation of Heaven and Earth*, cat. 39 c; 90, 154, 163, 198, 246, 248; 247
 Sano di Pietro: *The Initial D, with David Seated on a Throne*, cat. 23 c; 163; 162
 Sano di Pietro: *The Initial D, with The Last Judgment*, cat. 23 b; 161, 163; 161
 Cambridge, Massachusetts
 Harvard University Art Museums (Fogg Art Museum)
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine*, 220
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Descent into Limbo*, cat. 12 c; 126–28, 133; 132
 Carmelites, 37, 64–67, 72, 254
 Castiglione, Branda, Cardinal, 15, 22, 168
 and Vecchietta, 258
 Castiglione, Franceschino, 168
 Caterino di Corsino, 43–44
 Catherine of Alexandria, Saint, 228, 330
 Catherine of Siena, Saint, 168–69, 181, 188, 200, 252; *See also* Giovanni di Paolo, Saint Catherine of Siena series
 canonization of, 42, 222–24, 242, 268
 and eremitism, 52–53
 images of, 268
 Neroccio de'Landi's statue of, 19
 Cava dei Tirreni (Salerno), Badia
 Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *Psalter*, cat. 61 a–c; 302, 304–5; 303, 304
 Cavalca, Domenico, 104, 108, 111, 113, 115, 120, 123
 Cavenaghi, Luigi, 254
 Cepperello, Benedetto, 290
 Chicago
 The Art Institute

- Matteo di Giovanni: *The Flagellation of Saint Jerome*, cat. 49 a; 274–76, 278; 275
 Matteo di Giovanni: *The Vision of Saint Augustine*, cat. 49 c; 275, 277–78; 277
 Neroccio de'Landi: *Madonna and Child*, cat. 70; 319, 330–32; 331
 Chigi, Agostino, 255
 Chiusi
 Museo della Cattedrale
 Francesco di Giorgio: *Antiphony*, cat. 66; 322, 324; 323
 Cignoni, Bernardo, 25
 Cinughi, Giovanni, 19
 Ciriaco d'Ancona, 33
 Cistercian order, 169
 Clare, Saint, 169, 204–5; *See also* Giovanni di Paolo, Saint Clare of Assisi altarpiece
 Clement, Saint, 353–57
 Cleveland
 James D. Ireland collection
 Sano di Pietro: *The Initial A, with The Vision of Isaiah*, cat. 23 a; 161, 163; 160
 Museum of Art
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Adoration of the Magi*, 191; 191
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine and the Beggar*, cat. 38 c; 220, 225; 227
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine Invested with the Dominican Habit*, cat. 38 a; 221, 224; 225
 Cologne
 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum
 Sano di Pietro: *The Resurrection*, cat. 16; 128, 135, 142; 143
 Colombini, Blessed Giovanni, 54, 142
 Compagnia degli Artisti, 210–11
 Compagnia dei Disciplinati, 261
 Compagnia della Vergine, 27
 Compagnia di San Bernardino
 Sano di Pietro: processional banner, 164
 Compagnia di San Francesco, 11, 27
 Compagnia di Sant'Ansano, 264
 Compagnia di Santi Girolamo e Francesco, 26–27, 154, 335, 345
Compagnie (artists' associations), 27, 29, 107
Concistoro, 38, 43, 44, 46
 Confraternità di Santa Caterina della Notte, 243
 Confraternity of Santa Barbara, 51, 57
Consiglio del Popolo, 37, 43
Consiglio Grande, 43
 Coral Gables
 University of Miami, Lowe Art Museum
 Guidoccio Cozzarelli: *The Annunciation and The Journey to Bethlehem*, cat. 52; 283, 285; 284
 Corpus Christi, feast of, 64, 66, 73, 77
 Cosimo I of Florence, 58
 Cozzarelli, Guidoccio, cat. 51–52; 230, 270, 274, 281, 282–85, 289, 335
 and Matteo di Giovanni, 282–85
 Works by:
Adoration of the Magi altarpiece, 285

Cozzarelli, Guidoccio (*continued*)

- The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 285
The Annunciation and The Journey to Bethlehem, cat. 52; 283, 285; 284
The Dedication of a Church, 25; 25
The Legend of Cloelia, cat. 51; 13, 282–82, 319; 283
Madonna and Child, 282–83
Madonna and Child Enthroned, with *Saint Jerome and the Blessed Colombini*, 282
Saint Sebastian, 282
Crawford and Balcarres, Earl of, 345, 358
Crivelli, Taddeo, 291

D

- Dante Alighieri, 40, 168, 171, 193–98, 200, 215, 317
Inferno: illustrations, 120
Dati, Agostino, 47, 56
Decembrio, Pier Candido, 45
The Detroit Institute of Arts
Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine Dictating Her Dialogues to Raymond of Capua*, cat. 38 h; 220, 235; 236
Master of the Osservanza: *The Resurrection*, cat. 12 d; 126–28, 135; 134
The Divine Comedy; *See* Dante Alighieri
Domenico di Bartolo, cat. 40–42; 22, 26, 52, 127, 203, 249–57, 265, 268, 270, 272
collaboration with Sano di Pietro, 27, 139, 141, 250
and Florentine influence, 13–14, 249–50
Works by:
The Annunciation, 249, 252
The Coronation of the Virgin (with Sano di Pietro), 37, 141; 141
Madonna and Child, 139
Madonna and Child Enthroned, cat. 41; 13–14, 50, 249–50, 252; 253
Madonna and Child Enthroned, with *Saints Peter and Paul*, cat. 40; 13, 92, 250; 251
Madonna of Humility, 13, 27, 52, 249–50; 13
Madonna of Mercy, cat. 42; 14, 145, 254–57; 254–255
Perugia altarpiece, 188, 249, 252
Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Pellegrinaio, frescoes, 13–15, 48–50, 105, 139, 188, 249, 252, 255
The Building of the Hospital, 49; 51
The Care of the Sick, 14, 48; 14, 48
The Feeding of the Poor, 48–50; 49
Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges, 13–14, 48; 14, 51
The Raising of Foundlings, 48, 139; 49, 139
The Reception of Pilgrims and the Distribution of Alms, 48; 48
Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori, 4, 88
Works by:
choir stalls (Palazzo Pubblico), 146–47, 166, 193–94, 196; 196
Madonna and Child, 88
statue of Saint George, 92
Domenico Veneziano, 13, 15, 48, 127, 249
Works by:
Carnesecchi Tabernacle, 92
Saint Lucy altarpiece, 91
Dominic, Saint, 224
Dominicans, 22, 128*n*, 169, 192, 196, 198–200, 223, 241
and the blood of Christ, 206, 228, 230
and Catherine of Siena, 168, 223, 231, 235
and Giovanni di Paolo, 11
and the Observant movement, 52
Dominici, Giovanni, 224
Donatello, 265, 268, 332
influence on Siennese artists, 15–18, 258–59, 291, 298, 317, 322, 326–27
Works by:
The Assumption of the Virgin, 17
The Banquet of Herod, bronze relief, 111, 279, 281; 279
Baptistry font reliefs, 11, 16, 46
The Blood of the Redeemer, 17–18; 18
Madonna and Child with Cherubim, 13, 16, 20; 15
Pecci tomb, 3, 43, 45
statue of Saint John the Baptist, 16, 217–18; 217
Ducciesque Master
Madonna of Mercy, 145; 145
Duccio, 11, 21, 35–36, 146
Works by:
The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem, 175
Maestà, 4, 5–6, 27, 58, 74, 97–98, 108, 124, 126–28, 130, 133, 135, 175
Durham, England
The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle
Sassetta: *A Miracle of the Sacrament*, cat. 1 c; 72–74; 73

E

- El Paso Museum of Art
Giovanni di Paolo: *The Mourning Saint John the Evangelist, The Assumption of the Virgin, and Saint Ansanus*, cat. 33 d; 203; 202
Ercole de'Roberti, 75
d'Este, Borso, 50, 286
d'Este, Leonello, 33, 50, 51, 286
Esztergom
Keresztény Múzeum
Matteo di Giovanni: *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*, 278; 278
Eucharist, 66, 69, 72–73, 74, 76, 206
Eugenius IV, Pope, 49, 53, 256–57
van Eyck, Jan
Saint Jerome in His Study, 54
The Stigmatization of Saint Francis, 171

F

- Federico da Montefeltro, 22, 25–26, 33, 316, 327
Federighi, Antonio, 18, 44, 46, 55, 218, 298, 316, 331
von Fernbach, Hans, 263
Ficino, Marsilio, 56–57
Filarete, 33, 36
Filelfo, Francesco, 12, 34
Florence
Contini-Bonacossi Bequest
Sassetta: *Madonna of the Snow*, 5–8, 13, 45–46, 63, 65, 78, 80, 84, 92, 95, 98, 108, 115, 138, 175, 178; 6
Palazzo Vecchio, *aula minor* decorations, 40–41, 46
Dott. Lino Pasquale collection
Giovanni di Paolo: *The Attempted Martyrdom of Saint John the Evangelist at Porta Latina*, cat. 36 b; 212; 213
Rucellai collection, 153, 164
Santa Maria del Carmine, 64, 72
Brancacci Chapel, 7, 8, 97, 98, 111, 249, 254
Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna and Child Enthroned altarpiece*, cat. 41; 13–14, 50, 249–50, 252; 253
Santa Trinità
Domenico di Bartolo: *The Annunciation*, 249, 252
Uffizi, Galleria degli
Gentile da Fabriano: *The Adoration of the Magi*, 80; 83
Giovanni di Paolo: *Madonna and Child with Saints Dominic, Peter, Paul, and Thomas Aquinas*, 192; 192
Villa I Tatti, Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies
Sassetta: *Saint Francis in Glory*, 10, 22, 30; 9
Francesco da Napoli, 26
Francesco da Valdambrino, 37, 104, 249
Francesco d'Antonio, 217
Christ Healing the Lunatic Boy, 108
Francesco di Bartolomeo Alfei, 99
Francesco di Giorgio, cat. 64–68; 18, 20, 53, 139, 258–59, 275, 276, 278, 288, 316–27, 345
cassone panels, 316–19, 324–25
and classical motifs, 55
collaboration with Neroccio de'Landi, 27, 30, 316, 319, 325
and Donatello, 298, 317, 322, 326, 328–32
and Gothic style, 46
and Liberale da Verona and Girolamo da Cremona, 23, 25, 91, 296, 298, 300, 316–17, 319, 321–22, 324
and Luca Signorelli, 340–42
Madonna and Child reliefs, 331–32
as painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, 22, 316, 322
paintings celebrating Spannocchi wedding, 25, 344
and Pietro Orioli, 25–26, 316, 335, 337, 339
and Sano di Pietro and Matteo di Giovanni, 270, 272–73, 322

Francesco di Giorgio (*continued*)

at Urbino court, 22, 33, 316, 327

Works by:

The Adoration of the Shepherds, 30

The Annunciation, 324

Antiphonary (The Nativity), cat. 66;
321, 322, 324, 339; 323

biccherna cover, 319

Bichi Chapel, frescoes, 58

The Birth of the Virgin (Bichi Chapel),
327

The Coronation of the Virgin, 12, 23,

30, 55, 291, 316, 321–22; 24, 321

De Animalibus: illuminations, 34, 322,
322n, 324, 327, 327n

The Death of Virginia, cat. 67; 13,
324–25; 325

Design for a Wall Monument, cat. 68;
20, 325–27; 326

God the Father Surrounded by Angels,
cat. 65 a; 17, 321–22, 339; 320

Joseph Sold by His Brethren, 324

The Judgment of Paris, 324

Madonna and Child, paintings of, 322,
324

The Meeting of Dido and Aeneas, 325

Nativity altarpiece (Olivetani monastery
at Porta Tufi), 55, 316

Nativity altarpiece (San Domenico),
285, 327

The Nativity (High Museum of Art, At-
lanta), 321, 324

The Nativity (The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York), cat. 65 b; 17,
25, 321–22, 324, 339; 320

The Rape of Helen, 324–25

Scipio Africanus, 58, 344

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, 324

statue of Saint Christopher, 58

statue of Saint John the Baptist, 217,
316, 322; 217

The Story of Claudia Quinta, 325

The Story of Coriolanus, 325

The Story of Joseph, 324

The Story of Tuccia, 325

The Triumph of Chaste Love, cat. 64;
316–17, 319, 324; 318

The Triumph of Chastity, 316, 319, 324

The Virgin Protecting Siena, 3; 2

Francis, Saint, 30, 172, 204–5, 224

Franciscans, 22, 26, 164, 169–72, 181, 196, 241
and the blood of Christ, 206, 228, 230

Sano di Pietro and, 26, 138

and the stigmatization of Saint Catherine,
231

Francisco de Hollanda, 58

Franco-Flemish illuminators, 23, 25, 63, 107,
115, 120, 168

Fungai, Bernardino, cat. 76–77; 343, 345,
347, 352–59

Works by:

Adoration of the Shepherds predella, 30

Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece (San-
ta Maria dei Servi), 352–53; 353

predella, cat. 76 a–d; 25, 353–58;
355–357

The Conversion of Saint Clement, cat.
76 a; 354; 355

The Martyrdom of Saint Clement, cat.
76 d; 357–58; 357

*The Reunion of Saint Clement with His
Family*, cat. 76 b; 354; 355

Saint Clement Striking the Rock, cat.
76 c; 356; 356

Madonna and Child (Siena Pinacoteca),
352

Madonna and Child Enthroned, with
Saints Sebastian, Jerome, Nicholas

of Bari, and Anthony of Padua, 352

Saint Catherine altarpiece (Fontebranda),
352, 358

A Sibyl, cat. 77; 13, 25, 358–59; 359

The Story of Hippo, 352, 357–58

G

Gaddi, Agnolo, 252

Gadolo, Bernardo, 57

Galgani, Fra Niccolò, 168

Galganus, Saint, 169, 242

Gallerani, Blessed Andrea, cat. 38 l; 171,
241–42; 241

Genga, Girolamo, 25, 340

Gentile da Fabriano, 5

influence on Giovanni di Paolo, 11, 120,

169, 175, 178, 191

and Sassetta, 63, 67, 74, 77, 79, 80, 120

Works by:

The Adoration of the Magi, 11, 63, 77,
80, 120, 133, 169, 175, 189, 191;
83

Madonna de'Notai, 258

*The Presentation of Christ in the
Temple*, 189, 191; 189

Quaratesi altarpiece, 178

*Pilgrims at the Tomb of Saint Nicho-
las*, 73

*Saint Nicholas Saves a Ship in Dis-
tress*, 115

Gentiluomini, 37, 55

de Gerson, Jean, 235

Gesuati, 54, 57

Ghiberti, Lorenzo, 3, 150, 158

Baptistry font, reliefs, 11, 35, 46

writings on Sienese art, 4, 34–36

Ghirlandaio, Domenico, 25

The Adoration, 26

Giachetto di Benedetto, 51

Giles of Assisi, Blessed, 172

Giotto, 35, 67

The Death of Saint Francis, 240

Peruzzi Chapel, frescoes, 211, 212

Giovanni da Capistrano, 138

Giovanni da Milano

Pietà, 263

Giovanni da Siena, 50

Giovanni da Spoleto, 198

Giovanni da Udine, 286

Giovanni del Biondo, 145

Giovanni di Magno, 146, 147

Giovanni di Paolo, cat. 26–38; 18, 27, 46, 52,
87, 146, 168–242, 250, 268, 272, 307

and the Augustinians, 53–54, 211–12

collaboration with Sano di Pietro, 27, 139,
169

and Flemish art, 51

influence of Florentine artists on, 91

influence of Sassetta and Gentile da Fabri-
ano on, 11, 120, 169, 175, 178, 191

influence on later artists, 11–12

miniatures and illuminations, 168, 178,

293; *See also* under *Antiphonary*

and narrative painting, 31, 169, 174, 191,
215, 218, 222

and Pellegrino di Mariano, 243

and reliquary cupboard, 217

and Saint Bernardino, 52

Works by:

The Adoration of the Magi (The Cleve-
land Museum of Art), 191; 191

The Adoration of the Magi (Linsky Col-
lection, The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York), cat. 35; 209–10,
321; 208

The Annunciation, with *The Expulsion
of Adam and Eve from Paradise*,
191; 191

*The Annunciation to Zacharias and
The Angel of the Annunciation*,
cat. 37; 215–18; 214

Antiphonary, cat. 30; 53, 181, 188–89,
212; 180, 182–187

The Baptism of Christ, 209–10; 210

The Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, cat.
38 m; 223, 241–42; 241

The Blessed Andrea Gallerani, cat. 38 l;
223, 241–42; 241

Branchini altarpiece, 169, 178

Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane,
172; 174

Christ Suffering and Triumphant altar-
piece, 169

Compagnia degli Artisti predella, cat. 36
a–c; 210–12, 222, 240; 211, 213

*The Attempted Martyrdom of Saint
John the Evangelist at Porta La-
tina*, cat. 36 b; 212; 213

The Crucifixion, cat. 36 a; 211–12,
240; 211

*Saint John the Evangelist Raising
Drusiana*, cat. 36 c; 210, 212; 213

The Coronation of the Virgin (Sant'
Andrea), 178, 203–4; 203

Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece, cat.
33 a–d; 200, 203–4; 201–202

Christ as the Man of Sorrows, cat. 33
c; 203; 202

*The Mourning Saint John the Evange-
list*, *The Assumption of the Vir-
gin*, and *Saint Ansanus*, cat. 33
d; 203; 202

Saint Bartholomew, *The Entomb-
ment of the Virgin*, and *the
Mourning Virgin*, cat. 33 b; 200;
202

- Giovanni di Paolo (*continued*)
The Crucifixion (Berlin-Dahlem), 191, 191
The Crucifixion (Christ Church, Oxford), 222
The Crucifixion (Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg), 169, 174; 174
The Deposition, 172; 175
The Divine Comedy: illuminations, 22, 168, 193–98
The Entombment, 169
The Flight into Egypt, 11, 175, 178; 12
Fondi Chapel altarpiece (San Domenico), 176, 178
The Crucifixion, 176, 178
Madonna and Child, 12–13, 176; 176
Saint John the Baptist, 176, 178; 176
Saint Matthew and Saint Francis of Assisi, cat. 28; 172, 176, 178; 177
Saint Ursula, 176, 178; 176
A Franciscan Saint Levitating before a Crucifix, cat. 26 b; 170–72; 171
A Franciscan Saint Receiving Pilgrims Led by Saint James the Great, cat. 26 a; 170; 170
Guelfi altarpiece, cat. 32 a–b; 11, 192–94, 196, 198, 200, 248; 192, 195, 197, 199
The Creation and The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, cat. 32 a; 11, 21, 193–98, 248; 195, 197
Paradise, cat. 32 b; 11, 198, 200, 248; 199
The Infant Christ Disputing in the Temple, 209–10
The Initial A, with God the Father Appearing to David, cat. 29; 178; 179
The Last Judgment, 194, 200
Madonna and Child Enthroned, with *Saints Peter Damian, Thomas the Apostle, Clare, and Ursula*, 204; 205
Madonna and Child with Saints Dominic, Peter, Paul, and Thomas Aquinas, 192; 192
Madonna of Mercy (Santa Maria dei Servi), 172, 178, 256
A Miracle of Saint Nicholas, 358
The Nativity (Fogg Art Museum), 209
The Nativity (Pinacoteca Vaticana), 191
Pecci altarpiece, 128n, 169, 174, 178, 193, 220
Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece, 5, 169, 189, 210, 215; *See also* Saint Catherine of Siena series
The Presentation in the Temple (Siena Pinacoteca), 178
The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, cat. 31; 11, 189, 191; 190–191
The Purification of the Virgin, 218–22; 220
The Resurrection, 142, 172; 142
Saint Catherine (Fogg Art Museum), 220
Saint Catherine of Siena series, cat. 38 a–j; 11, 37, 42, 138, 168–69, 189, 210, 217, 218–42, 268; 225–227, 229, 231–232, 234, 236–237, 239
The Crucifixion, cat. 38 k; 219–22, 240; 240
The Death of Saint Catherine, cat. 38 j; 220, 238, 240; 239
The Miraculous Communion of Saint Catherine, cat. 38 g; 221, 233, 235; 234
The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine, cat. 38 b; 220, 228; 226
Saint Catherine and the Beggar, cat. 38 c; 220, 228, 235; 227
Saint Catherine before a Pope, cat. 38 i; 220, 235, 238; 237
Saint Catherine Beseeching Christ to Resuscitate Her Mother, cat. 38 f; 220, 233; 232
Saint Catherine Dictating Her Dialogues to Raymond of Capua, cat. 38 h; 220, 235; 236
Saint Catherine Exchanging Her Heart with Christ, cat. 38 d; 228–29; 229
Saint Catherine Invested with the Dominican Habit, cat. 38 a; 221, 224; 225
Saint Catherine Receiving the Stigmata, cat. 38 e; 219, 230; 231
Saint Clare of Assisi altarpiece, cat. 34 a–b; 204–5; 206–207
A Miracle of Saint Clare, cat. 34 a; 206; 206
Saint Clare of Assisi Saving a Child from a Wolf, cat. 34 b; 207; 207
Saint Clare Rescuing the Shipwrecked, 204; 204
Saint Francis Investing Clare with Her Habit, 204; 204
Saint Jerome Appearing to Saint Augustine, 218
Saint Nicholas of Bari polyptych, 204
Saint Nicholas of Tolentino altarpiece, 204, 211–12, 218, 222–23, 268
San Galgano altarpiece, 169
Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist, 215–18; 216
Scrofiano altarpiece (with Sano di Pietro), 27–28, 145, 152
The Triumph of Venus, 168
The Way to Calvary (John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art), cat. 27; 130, 172, 174–75; 173
The Way to Calvary (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore), 174; 172
Giovanni di Pietro, cat. 45–46; 264–69 and Matteo di Giovanni, 264–65, 270, 272, 279
Works by:
The Ascension of Saint Bernardino of Siena, cat. 46; 42, 268–69; 269
The Crucifixion, 265; 265
San Pietro Ovile altarpiece (with Matteo di Giovanni), cat. 45 a, b; 4, 19, 265–68; 265–267
The Marriage of the Virgin, cat. 45 a; 265–67; 266
The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents, cat. 45 b; 265, 267–68; 267
Giovanni di Stefano, 16, 44, 358
Hermes Trismegistus, pavement, 56–57; 56
Giovanni di Taldo, 25, 328, 328n, 330
Giovanni di Turino, 3, 33, 38, 146
Giovannino de'Grassi, 168
Girolamo da Cremona, cat. 53–55; 17, 23, 25, 102, 154, 178, 243, 246, 270, 277, 286–90, 311
and Benvenuto di Giovanni, 31n, 300, 302, 304
influence on Francesco di Giorgio, 291, 296, 298, 300, 316–17, 319, 321–22, 324
and Liberale da Verona, 286, 288–89, 291, 293, 296–97, 299
Works by:
The Annunciation, 286
The Ascension, 23; 22
Border Decoration with Deer, cat. 54 c; 23, 289; 289
The Descent from the Cross, cat. 55; 289–90; 290
The Initial O (or D), with God the Father Enthroned, cat. 53; 287–88; 287
The Nativity (Yale University Art Gallery), 324
A Priest Celebrating Mass, cat. 54 a; 23, 288, 289; 288
The Resurrection, 289; 288
A Roundel with Deer, cat. 54 b; 23, 288, 289; 288
Girolamo del Pacchia, 328, 334
Girolamo di Benvenuto, 300, 305
Madonna of the Snow altarpiece, 315
Giuliano da Maiano, 19
Giuliano di Bartolomeo, 217
Glens Falls, New York
The Hyde Collection
Matteo di Giovanni: *The Banquet of Herod*, cat. 50 a; 20, 279, 281; 280
Gozzoli, Benozzo, 100, 108
Graham, William, 277
Mr. and Mrs. Marco Grassi collection
Master of the Osservanza: *The Dream of Saint Joseph*, cat. 11; 123–24, 126; 125
Gregorio di Cecco, 99, 127
Gregory XI, Pope, 235, 238
Gregory XII, Pope, 40
Griselda Master; *See* Master of the Griselda Legend
Guarino, 50
Guerrini, Battista di Pietro, 354
Guidini, Cristoforo di Gano, 224, 235
Guido da Siena, 206, 241
Guido da Siena, follower of
Saint Francis, with Scenes from His Life, 104, 171; 106
Guilds
Arte della Lana, 37, 63–64, 66, 77
Carnaiuoli, 37
Mercanzia, 46
Pizzicaiuoli, 37, 169, 189, 218, 220

H

Houston

Museum of Fine Arts

Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Clare of Assisi Saving a Child from a Wolf*, cat. 34 b; 207; 207Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint John the Baptist*, 176, 178; 176Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Ursula*, 176, 178; 176

Humanism, 15, 19, 34, 35

and Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini, 57–58

and lettering on paintings, 12–13

Hus, John, 66, 76–77

Hutton, Edward, 164

I

Innocent IV, Pope, 206

J

Jacquemart de Hesdin, 4, 83

The Flight into Egypt, 120

Jacopo di Filippo, 26

James, Saint, 171–72, 176

Jarves, J. J., 104, 115, 117

Jerome, Saint, 54, 275–76, 277–78, 345

Joan II, Queen of Naples, 105

John the Baptist, Saint, 152, 169, 210–11, 277–78, 330

relic of arm, 217–18

John the Evangelist, Saint, 210–12, 277

Barbara Piasecka Johnson collection

Sano di Pietro: *The Nativity*, 166–67, 321; 167

Joni, Icilio, 254

Joos van Ghent, 22

Joseph, Saint, 209, 268

L

Lactantius, Saint, 56–57

Lecceto, hermitage, 53, 120, 181; 53

and eremitic life, 52–54

Giovanni di Paolo: choir books, cat. 30; 168, 181, 188–89

Pellegrino di Mariano: *Gradual* miniatures, 243, 246

Leonardo da Vinci

The Battle of Anghiari, 297

Liberale da Verona, cat. 56–59; 17, 23, 25, 154, 243, 246, 270

and Benvenuto di Giovanni, 300, 302, 304

choir books for Monte Oliveto Maggiore, 54–55, 322, 324n

and Francesco di Giorgio, 30, 291, 296, 298, 316–17, 319, 321–22, 324

and Girolamo da Cremona, 286, 288–89, 291, 293, 296–97, 299

influence on Guidoccio Cozzarelli, 282–83

and Neroccio de'Landi, 328

Works by:

Book of Hours, cat. 59; 19, 298–99; 298–299*The Chess Players*, cat. 57 b; 25, 291, 294–96, 319; 295, 296*Christ Washing the Feet of Saint Peter*, 296*The Rape of Europa*, 296, 297*The Rape of Helen*, 296, 297*Roman Missal*, cat. 56; 293; 292*Saint Martin and the Beggar*, 23; 22*Scene from a Novella*, cat. 57 a; 25, 291, 294–96, 319; 294, 296*Scene of an Ancient Ambush*, cat. 58; 13, 25, 291, 296, 297–98, 319; 297*Tobias*, cassone panel, 325

Limbourg brothers, 4, 120, 168

Lippi, Filippo, 3, 6–7, 250, 254

Lippo Memmi, 27

Lippo Vanni, 27, 146, 203

The Coronation of the Virgin, 36–37

Loeser, Charles, 346, 358, 359n

Lolli, Gregorio, 34

London

T. S. Bathurst collection

Vecchietta: *The Nativity*, cat. 43; 259, 261; 260

National Gallery

Matteo di Giovanni: *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 23, 277; 24

Lorenzetti, Ambrogio, 4, 10–11, 22, 33, 63, 65, 77–78, 97, 146–47, 149–51, 189, 191, 334

in Florence, 22

Ghiberti's praise of, 4, 35

influence on Sassetta, 79

Works by:

The Birth of the Virgin, 149, 152*The Consecration of Saint Nicholas*, 73; 74*Good Government and Bad Government*, 3–4, 13, 36, 47, 249, 255

lost fresco cycle of the Creed, 194

Madonna del Latte, 329*Mappamondo*, 196*The Presentation in the Temple*, 4, 11, 45, 175, 189, 191, 215, 221; 221*Saint Louis of Toulouse before Pope Boniface VIII*, 75

Lorenzetti, Pietro, 4–5, 11, 13, 22, 36, 146–47, 334

in Florence, 22

influence on Sassetta, 63, 67, 69, 72, 77, 79

Works by:

Birth of the Virgin altarpiece, 4, 148–49, 151; 72

Carmine altarpiece, 120

The Last Supper, 14

Passion cycle (San Francesco, Assisi), 97, 127

Saint Humilitas, 104, 120

Spedale della Scala, fresco cycle, 150–51

Lorenzo Monaco, 216

Louisville

J. B. Speed Art Museum

Sano di Pietro: *The Initial M*, with *The Annunciation*, 163; 163

Luca di Tommè, 27, 205

Lugano

Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection

Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine before a Pope*, cat. 38 i; 220, 235, 238; 237

M

Maccagnino, Angelo di Pietro, 44, 50

Maconi, Stefano, 168

Malavolti family, 37

Malibu

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Giovanni di Paolo: *The Initial A*, with *God the Father Appearing to David*, cat. 29; 178; 179

Manetti, Rutilio, 192

Mantegna, 23, 277, 291, 293, 305, 311, 324

and Girolamo da Cremona, 286, 288

Works by:

The Adoration of the Shepherds, 288*Saint James before Herod Agrippa*, 297

della Marca, Fra Giacomo, 26

Mariotto da Volterra, 328, 328n

Marrasio, Giovanni, 33

Marrina, 34, 57

Martino di Bartolomeo, 37, 104, 168, 224, 249

Martinozzi, Agnolo di Giovanni d'Agnolo, 105

Martinozzi, Blessed Giovanni, 105

Martinozzi family, 105–6, 111

Martinozzi, Niccolò, Conte del Castelluccio, 105, 262

Masaccio, 5, 8, 13, 15, 90, 92, 98, 99, 111,

249, 250, 252, 254

collaboration with Masolino, 8, 250, 254

Sassetta's study of, 63, 67, 77, 78

Works by:

Brancacci Chapel, frescoes, 7, 8, 78, 98,

111, 249–50, 254; 7

Saint Peter Baptizing the Neophytes, 7; 7*Saint Peter Distributing the Goods of the Church*, 111*Saint Peter Preaching*, 8*The Tribute Money*, 8

Masolino, 8, 22, 63, 97, 111, 168, 254

collaboration with Masaccio, 8, 250, 254

and Vecchietta, 15, 258

Works by:

The Crucifixion, 258*The Raising of Tabitha*, 97*Saint Peter Preaching*, 8*The Tribute Money*, 8

Master of the Griselda Legend, cat. 75; 25, 343, 344

Master of the Griselda Legend (*continued*)
 collaboration with Pietro di Domenico,
 344, 346–47, 351
 influence of Luca Signorelli and Pintu-
 ricchio, 344, 346–47
 paintings celebrating the Spannocchi
 wedding, 344
 Works by:
Alexander the Great, 346
Artemisia, 344, 346
Claudia Quinta, 58
 Grosseto angels, 344
 Spannocchi Heroes and Heroines series,
 346–47
The Three Theological Virtues (with
 Pietro di Domenico): *Faith, Charity,*
and Hope, cat. 75 a–c; 344, 346–47,
 351, 358–59, 359*n*; 348–350
 Master of the Osservanza, cat. 9–13; 11, 64,
 65, 74, 99–136, 137, 163
 collaboration with other artists, 29, 100,
 106–7, 127, 136
 identification of, 99–100
 and Sano di Pietro, 99–100, 117, 130,
 135–36, 139, 325
 and Sassetta, 63, 83, 99–100, 102, 111,
 126–28
 use of silver, 21, 99
 Works by:
The Assumption of the Virgin, 124,
 126; 124
Birth of the Virgin altarpiece, 5, 72, 80,
 99, 124, 126, 136, 149; 124
The Burial of Santa Monica and Saint
Augustine Departing for Africa,
 cat. 9 a; 53, 90, 100, 102, 106, 108,
 154; 101
The Crucifixion, 126–27
The Dream of Saint Joseph, cat. 11;
 123–24, 126, 149; 125
The Initial G, with the Virgin and
Saints, cat. 9 b; 100, 102, 106; 103
Madonna and Child Enthroned, with
Two Cherubim, cat. 13; 95, 126,
 135–36; 136
The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew
 predella, 99, 130
 Osservanza triptych, 99–100
 Passion predella, cat. 11 a–d; 99, 107,
 126–36; 129–132, 134
The Descent into Limbo, cat. 12 c;
 126–28, 133, 311; 132
The Flagellation of Christ, cat. 12 a;
 11, 126–27, 128, 130, 133; 129
The Resurrection, cat. 12 d; 126–28,
 135–36, 142; 134
The Way to Calvary, cat. 12 b;
 126–27, 130–33; 130–131
Pietà with Saint Sebaldus and a Donor,
 99–100, 113; 113
 Saint Anthony Abbot series, cat. 10 a–h;
 11, 31, 104–23, 127; 109–110, 112,
 114, 116, 118–119, 121–122
The Funeral of Saint Anthony, cat. 10
 h; 123, 127; 122
The Journey and Meeting of Saint

Anthony with Saint Paul the
Hermit, cat. 10 g; 120, 123; 121
Saint Anthony at Mass, cat. 10 a; 5,
 11, 21, 102, 108, 123, 127; 109
Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils, cat.
 10 e; 107, 115, 117, 120, 128; 116
Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old
Hermit, cat. 10 c; 111, 113, 117; 112
Saint Anthony Distributing His
Wealth, cat. 10 b; 102, 111, 113,
 120, 123, 128–30; 110
Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of
Gold, cat. 10 f; 4, 117, 120, 123,
 135, 158; 118–119
Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil
in the Guise of a Woman, cat. 10
 d; 102, 107, 113, 115, 117, 120,
 123, 127, 133, 135; 114
Saint George Slaying the Dragon,
 29–30, 136; 28–29
 Matteo di Giovanni, cat. 47–50; 4, 12, 14,
 26, 219, 250, 270–81, 293, 302, 334,
 337, 339, 340, 345
 and Antonio Pollaiuolo, 19–20, 270, 277,
 283, 298
 cassone panels by, 319
 and confraternities, 26
 and Giovanni di Pietro, 264–66
 influence of Florentine painting on, 19–
 20, 270, 272, 274–76
 narrative painting and, 31
 paintings celebrating Spannocchi wed-
 ding, 25, 344
 Works by:
The Adoration of the Shepherds, 274
The Adoration of the Shepherds, lu-
 nette for, 30
The Assumption of the Virgin, 23, 277;
 24
The Banquet of Herod, cat. 50 a; 20,
 278–79, 281; 280
The Beheading of Saint Paul, 278–79
The Birth of the Virgin, 285
The Crucifixion of Saint Peter, 287–79;
 278
The Flagellation of Christ, 19
The Flight into Egypt, 285
Madonna and Child with Saints (Mu-
 seo dell'Opera del Duomo), 21; 21
Madonna and Child with Saints
 (Pienza Cathedral), 13, 18–19, 270;
 19
Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome
and Catherine of Alexandria and
Two Angels, cat. 48; 20, 272, 274;
 273
Madonna of the Snow, 19; 19
Massacre of the Innocents altarpiece,
 20, 274–75, 285
The Mystical Crucifixion (attributed to
 Matteo), cat. 47; 270, 272; 271
 Pienza altarpiece, 19, 272
 Placidi altarpiece, cat. 49 a–c; 19, 274–
 78; 274–277
The Crucifixion, cat. 49 b; 274, 276–
 77; 276

The Flagellation of Saint Jerome, cat.
 49 a; 274, 275, 276; 275
The Vision of Saint Augustine, cat.
 49 c; 275, 277–78; 277
Saint Barbara altarpiece, 21, 37, 51–52,
 57, 306*n*; 21
Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to
Life, cat. 50 b; 20, 281; 280, 281
 San Pietro Ovale altarpiece (with Gio-
 vanni di Pietro), cat. 45 a, b; 4, 19,
 265–68; 265–267
Saint Peter and Saint Paul, pinnacles,
 265; 265
 Medici, Cosimo de', 56
 Medici, Lorenzo de', 57
 Medici, Lucrezia de', 286, 289–90
 Melbourne
 National Gallery of Victoria
 Sassetta: *The Burning of a Heretic*, cat.
 1 e; 31, 75–77, 127; 76
 Mercati, Venturino, 23, 154, 158, 286, 324,
 324*n*
 Mezzavacca, Leonardo, 55
 Michael the Archangel, Saint, 218, 220
 Michelangelo, 4, 58, 340
 Michele di Matteo, 45
 Michelino da Besozzo, 168
 Montalcino
 San Francesco, 149–50, 267
 Sant'Agostino, 105
 Monte Oliveto Maggiore, 54–55, 223, 231
 choir book illuminations for, 17, 23, 25,
 322–23
 by Girolamo da Cremona, 23, 286
 by Liberale da Verona, 23, 291
 by Sano di Pietro, 154–58
 paintings for
 Francesco di Giorgio: *The Coronation of*
the Virgin altarpiece, 12, 23, 30, 55,
 291, 316, 321–22; 24, 321
 Luca Signorelli: *Life of Saint Benedict*
 frescoes, 347
 Montepulciano
 Giovanni di Paolo: Compagnia degli Artisti
 predella, 210, 211–12, 222, 240
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Nicholas of To-*
lentino altarpiece, 204, 211–12, 218,
 222–23, 268
 Monteriggioni (Siena)
 Musco del Seminario Arcivescovile
 Vecchietta: *The Lamentation*, cat. 44;
 15, 105, 258, 261–63; 262

N

Nanni di Pietro; *See* Giovanni di Pietro
 Neoplatonism, 57
 Neri di Montegargulo, Bishop of Siena, 44–
 45
 Neroccio de'Landi, cat. 69–71; 12, 19, 25,
 27, 139, 259, 270, 272, 322, 328–34,
 340, 344, 358
 collaboration with Francesco di Giorgio,
 27, 30, 316, 319, 325, 328–32

- Neroccio de'Landi (*continued*)
 devotional images of the Madonna and Child, 20, 328, 332, 334
 and Liberale da Verona, 328
 paintings celebrating the Spannocchi wedding, 25, 344
 polychrome stucco reliefs and cassone panels, 328, 331–32, 332*n*, 334
 and workshop assistants, 328, 330, 334
 Works by:
Claudia Quinta, 344
Madonna and Child, cat. 70; 20, 319, 330–32; 331
Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene (Fondazione Horne, Florence), 334
Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene (Poliarco, S.A.), cat. 71; 20, 25, 319, 332, 334; 333
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alexandria, cat. 69; 20, 319, 329–30; 329
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome, 334
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene, 334
Madonna and Child with Saints Michael and Bernardino, 330, 334
Portrait of a Lady, 13; 31*n*
A Possessed Woman Is Exorcised (Palazzo Pubblico), 166
Saint Sebastian predella, 30, 32*n*, 325
 statue of Saint Catherine, 19
- New Haven
 Yale University Art Gallery
 Giovanni di Paolo: *A Miracle of Saint Clare*, cat. 34 a; 206; 206
 Girolamo da Cremona: *The Initial O* (or D), with God the Father Enthroned, cat. 53; 287–88; 287
 Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils*, cat. 10 c; 107, 115, 117, 120, 128; 116
 Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman*, cat. 10 d; 113, 115; 114
- New York
 Bernard H. Breslauer collection
 Pellegrino di Mariano: *The Initial A, with the Three Marias at the Tomb*, cat. 39 b; 163, 246; 244
 Pellegrino di Mariano: *The Initial S, with Christ Calling Saint Peter*, cat. 39 a; 163, 243, 246; 245
 Mr. and Mrs. Nereo Fioratti collection
 Giovanni di Pietro: *The Ascension of Saint Bernardino of Siena*, cat. 46; 268–69; 269
 Unknown Sienese painter: *The Initial P, with Saint John the Baptist*, cat. 14; 137; 137
 The Frick Collection
 Vecchietta: *The Resurrection*, 17–18; 18
- Mr. and Mrs. Marco Grassi collection
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Dream of Saint Joseph*, cat. 11; 123–24, 126; 125
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art
 Guidoccio Cozzarelli: *The Legend of Cloelia*, cat. 51; 282–83; 283
 Francesco di Giorgio: *The Nativity*, cat. 65 b; 321–22; 320
 Francesco di Giorgio: *The Triumph of Chaste Love*, cat. 64; 316–17, 319; 318
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Miraculous Communion of Saint Catherine*, cat. 38 g; 221, 233, 235; 234
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Paradise*, cat. 32 b; 198, 200; 199
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, cat. 31; 189, 191; 190–191
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Matthew and Saint Francis of Assisi*, cat. 28; 172, 176, 178; 177
 Girolamo da Cremona: *The Descent from the Cross*, cat. 55; 289–90; 290
 Liberale da Verona: *The Chess Players*, cat. 57 b; 291, 294–96; 295–296
 Liberale da Verona: *Scene from a Novella*, cat. 57 a; 291, 294–96; 294, 296
 Master of the Griselda Legend and Pietro di Domenico: *The Three Theological Virtues*
Charity, cat. 75 b; 346–47, 351; 349
Faith, cat. 75 a; 344, 346–47; 348
Hope, cat. 75 c; 346–47, 351; 350
 Jacopo della Quercia: *Study for the Fonte Gaia*, 38; 38
 Sassetta: *The Journey of the Magi*, cat. 2 a; 4, 80, 115; 80–81
 Sassetta: *Madonna and Child with Angels*, cat. 4; 7, 87–88; 86
- Robert Lehman Collection
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *Madonna and Child*, cat. 60; 23, 300, 302; 301
 Francesco di Giorgio: *Design for a Wall Monument*, cat. 68; 325–27; 326
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Annunciation to Zacharias and The Angel of the Annunciation*, cat. 37; 215–18; 214
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni*, cat. 38 m; 223, 241–42; 241
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Blessed Andrea Gallerani*, cat. 38 l; 223, 241; 241
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, cat. 33 a; 200, 203, 204; 201
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Creation and The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, cat. 32 a; 11, 21, 193–98, 248; 195, 197
- Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine Beseeching Christ to Resuscitate Her Mother*, cat. 38 f; 220, 233; 232
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine Receiving the Stigmata*, cat. 38 c; 219, 230–31; 231
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint John the Evangelist Raising Drusiana*, cat. 36 c; 212; 213
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Initial G, with the Virgin and Saints*, cat. 9 b; 100, 102; 103
 Master of the Osservanza: *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Two Cherubim*, cat. 13; 95, 126, 135–36; 136
 Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold*, cat. 10 f; 107, 115, 117, 120; 118–119
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *Saint Michael and Saint Nicholas of Bari*, cat. 6; 92; 93
 Sano di Pietro: *The Birth and Naming of Saint John the Baptist*, cat. 19; 152, 153; 152
 Sano di Pietro: *The Initial D, with The Torture of Saint Agatha*, cat. 22; 158; 159
- Jack and Belle Linsky Collection
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Adoration of the Magi*, cat. 35; 209–10; 208
- Private collections
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*, cat. 38 b; 220, 228; 226
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Catherine Exchanging Her Heart with Christ*, cat. 38 d; 228–29; 229
- Peter Jay Sharp collection
 Giovanni di Paolo: *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, cat. 33 c; 203; 202
- Niccolò di Ser Sozzo, 27, 205
 Niccolò di Tommaso, 259
 Nicholas of Tolentino, Saint, 41; *See also* Giovanni di Paolo: *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* altarpiece
 Nicholas V, Pope, 40, 44, 45, 51
 Nicola Pisano, 124
 Northesk, Earl of, 126, 133
 Northwick, Lord, 149
 Novello, Blessed Agostino, 48, 207

O

- Observant order
 Augustinian, 52–53, 181
 Franciscan, 27, 52, 138
Opera del Duomo, 43–46; *See also* Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
 Orioli, Pietro, cat. 72–73; 14, 15, 26, 270, 274, 335–39, 340, 343, 345, 347, 352
 and architectural perspective, 26, 108, 339
 and Francesco di Giorgio, 25–26, 316, 335, 337, 339

Orioli, Pietro (*continued*)
 paintings celebrating the Spannocchi wedding, 344
 as pupil of Matteo di Giovanni, 282, 335, 339
 Works by:
Ascension altarpiece, 339n
biccherna cover, 26, 108, 335, 337
Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles, 26, 335, 337; 26
The Coronation of the Virgin, 337
Madonna and Child altarpiece (Buonconvento), 335
Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome and a Female Saint, cat. 72; 26, 332, 337; 336
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Jerome, 26; 27
The Nativity, cat. 73; 26, 337, 339; 338
The Nativity, with Saints Bernardino and Anthony of Padua, 335, 339
Sulpitia, 335, 339
 Orlandi, Mano, 99
 Osservanza, Church of the, 20, 26, 34, 169
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: miniatures, 304
 Master of the Osservanza: triptych, 99
 Ottley, William Young, 161, 163
 Oxford
 Ashmolean Museum
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Baptism of Christ*, 209–10; 210

P

Pacchiarotto, Giacomo, 335, 337; *See also* Orioli, Pietro
 Paleologus, Thomas, 217
 Panormita, 34
 Paolo di Giovanni Fei, follower of, 267
 Paolo di Middelburg, 34
 Paris
 Musée du Louvre
 Gentile da Fabriano: *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, 189; 189
 Sassetta: *The Soul of the Miser of Citer-na*, 8; 8
 Parma
 Pinacoteca Giuseppe Stuard
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, cat. 8 b; 95, 97–98; 98
 Pasadena
 Norton Simon Museum of Art
 Neruccio de'Landi: *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alexandria*, cat. 69; 319, 329–30; 329
 Pasquino da Montepulciano, 33
 Passavant, Johann David, 219
 Patrizi, Agostino, 56, 58
 Patrizi, Francesco, 33, 34
 Paul, Saint, 270, 272
 de Pecci, Giovanni, Bishop of Grosseto, 3, 43–45
 de Pecci, Pietro, 40, 43
 Pecci altarpiece; *See* Giovanni di Paolo
 Pellegrino di Mariano, cat. 39; 102, 158, 243–48, 267
 Works by:
The Creation of Heaven and Earth, cat. 39 c; 90, 154, 163, 198, 246, 248; 247
The Initial A, with the Three Maries at the Tomb, cat. 39 b; 163, 246; 245
The Initial S, with Christ Calling Saint Peter, cat. 39 a; 163, 243, 246; 244
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Bernardino, 243
 Perugino, Pietro, 25, 352
 and Luca Signorelli, 340
 Peruzzi, Baldassare, 25, 278, 335
 Peter, Saint, 354, 356
 Peter Damian, Saint, 204–5; 205
 Peter of Siena, Saint, 219, 242
 Petrarch, 22, 40
 Petroni family, 145, 204
 Petrucci, Pandolfo, 25, 37, 44, 55–58
 Pettinaio, Blessed Piero, 171
 Philadelphia
 Free Library, Rare Book Department, Lewis Collection
 Girolamo da Cremona: *Border Decoration with Deer*, cat. 54 c; 289; 289
 Girolamo da Cremona: *A Priest Celebrating Mass*, cat. 54 a; 288; 288
 Girolamo da Cremona: *A Roundel with Deer*, cat. 54 b; 288; 288
 Liberale da Verona: *Book of Hours*, cat. 59; 298–99; 298–299
 Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Way to Calvary*, cat. 27; 172, 174–75; 173
 Giovanni di Pietro: *The Marriage of the Virgin*, cat. 45 a; 265–67; 266
 Giovanni di Pietro: *The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents*, cat. 45 b; 267–68; 267
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Way to Calvary*, cat. 12 b; 126–27, 130, 133; 130–131
 Piccinino, Niccolò, 37, 40–41, 44, 212
 Piccolomini, Aeneas Silvius; *See* Pius II, Pope
 Piccolomini, Angelo, 34
 Piccolomini, Angelo d'Urbano del Testa, 337
 Piccolomini, Caterina, 19
 Piccolomini family, 3, 37, 55–58, 298–99
 Piccolomini, Francesco Todeschini, Cardinal, 25, 40, 45, 55–58
 Piccolomini, Guid'Antonio di Biagio, 299
 Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, 57
 Pienza
 Cathedral, 3, 18, 57, 243; 52
 Giovanni di Paolo: altarpiece, 11, 18, 169, 221–22
 Matteo di Giovanni: *Madonna and Child with Saints*, 13, 18–19, 270; 19
 Pellegrino di Mariano: choir book illuminations for, 243
 Sano di Pietro: Antiphony illuminations for, 158, 243
 Sano di Pietro: *Madonna and Child with Saints*, 11, 18
 Vecchietta: *Assumption of the Virgin altarpiece*, 16–18, 259; 17
 Piccolomini Palace, 57; 52
 Piero della Francesca, 22, 84, 335
 and Luca Signorelli, 340
 Works by:
The Baptism of Christ, 270, 279
The Flagellation, 276
Madonna of Mercy, 10, 63
 Pietro del Minella, 45
 Pietro di Domenico, cat. 75; 274, 285, 335, 343, 345–51
 collaboration with the Master of the Griselda Legend, 344, 346–47, 351
 influence of Luca Signorelli and Pietro Orioli on, 345–47
 Works by:
The Assumption (Radicondoli), 345
Assumption of the Virgin altarpiece (Buonconvento), 346–47
The Assumption of the Virgin (Campansi), 347
Madonna (Crawford collection), 345, 347, 358
Madonna (Siena Pinacoteca), 345, 358
Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and John the Baptist, 345
Madonna and Child with Two Angels, 345
The Meeting of Jephthah and His Daughter, 345
The Nativity (Radicondoli), 345
The Nativity with Saints Martin and Galganus, 345, 358
Saint Catherine of Siena, 346
A Sibyl (Fondazione Guido Cagnola), 358–59, 359n
The Three Theological Virtues (with the Master of the Griselda Legend): *Faith, Charity, and Hope*, cat. 75 a–c; 25, 344, 346–47, 351, 358–59, 359n; 348–350
 Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio, cat. 6–8; 22, 52, 72, 88n, 91–98, 127, 265, 268–69
 Borgo Sansepolcro processional banner, 272
 paintings of Saint Bernardino, 91
 Sassetta's influence on, 91–92, 95, 97–98
 Works by:
Arliquiera (with Vecchietta), 27, 91; *See also* Vecchietta
The Birth of Saint Nicholas of Bari, cat. 8 a; 95, 97; 96
The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem, cat. 8 b; 95, 97–98; 98
Madonna and Child, 91
Madonna and Child with Cherubim, cat. 7; 95; 94
Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Dorothy, 92; 92
A Miracle of Saint Augustine (?), 97; 97
The Nativity (Asciano), 5, 10, 91, 95, 124; 10
Saint Bernardino, 42; 42
Saint Michael and Saint Nicholas of Bari, cat. 6; 92; 93

Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio (*continued*)
Scenes of Monastic Life, 53; 53
 Pinturicchio, 25, 44, 80, 340, 344, 352
Life of Pius II frescoes (Piccolomini Library), 57, 58
 Pisanello, 14, 50, 51
 Pius II, Pope, 34, 37, 40, 45, 158, 171, 217, 220, 243, 299, 302
 autobiography, *I Commentarii*, 3, 38, 56
 and Flemish tapestries, 51–52
 and Florentine art, 35
 and humanism, 13
 monument to his parents, 18, 327
 and Pienza Cathedral, 2, 16–17, 51, 169
 and Renaissance style in Siena, 18
 and Saint Catherine of Siena, 223, 228, 230, 235, 238, 242
 and Siena's Roman origins, 55–56
 Platt, Dan Fellows, 254, 337
 Poliarco S.A.
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Lamentation*, cat. 63; 314–15; 314
 Neroccio de'Landi: *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Mary Magdalene*, cat. 71; 332, 334; 333
 Pollaiuolo, Antonio, 22, 275
 and Matteo di Giovanni, 20, 270, 277, 283, 298
 Pontano, Francesco, 34
 Poor Clares, 145, 204–5
 Porcari, Francesco di Pietro, 77
 Princeton University Art Museum
 Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, cat. 41; 50, 249–50, 252; 253
 Matteo di Giovanni: *The Mystical Crucifixion*, cat. 47; 270, 272; 271
 Private collections
 Bernardino Fungai: *A Sibyl*, cat. 77; 358–59; 359
 Francesco di Giorgio: *The Death of Virginia*, cat. 67; 324–25; 325
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Crucifixion*, cat. 36 a; 212; 211
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Death of Saint Catherine*, cat. 38 j; 238, 240; 239
 Giovanni di Paolo: *A Franciscan Saint Levitating before a Crucifix*, cat. 26 b; 170–72; 171
 Giovanni di Paolo: *A Franciscan Saint Receiving Pilgrims Led by Saint James the Great*, cat. 26 a; 170; 170
 Liberale da Verona: *Scene of an Ancient Ambush*, cat. 58; 291, 296, 297–98; 297
 Matteo di Giovanni: *The Crucifixion*, cat. 49 b; 274, 276–77; 276
 Pietro Orioli: *Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome and a Female Saint (Aurea?)*, cat. 72; 332, 337; 336
 Pietro Orioli: *The Nativity*, cat. 73; 337, 339; 338
 Sano di Pietro: *Madonna of Mercy*, cat. 17; 145; 146
 Sano di Pietro: *The Nativity*, cat. 25; 166–67; 167
 Sano di Pietro: *A Possessed Woman Is Exorcised*, cat. 24 b; 166; 165

Sano di Pietro: *Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to Life*, cat. 20; 153–54; 153
 Sano di Pietro: *Saint Bernardino Resuscitating a Drowned Child*, cat. 24 a; 164–66; 165
 Sassetta: *Saint Augustine*, cat. 3; 84; 85
 Purification (or Presentation), feast of, 189

Q

della Quercia, Jacopo, 3, 13, 15, 18, 45, 50, 168, 263
 influence on Domenico di Bartolo, 249–50, 252
 as *operaio* of the *Opera del Duomo*, 44
 Works by:
 Baptistry font, reliefs, 11
The Annunciation to Zacharias, 215
 Fonte Gaia, 11, 33, 38, 43, 58, 252, 351; 38
The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, 193; 194
 della Quercia, Priamo, 188, 268
The Rector Invested with the Augustinian Habit, 48–49; 50

R

Ramboux, Johann Anton, 142, 203, 219, 278
 Raphael, 4, 340
 Rasini, Blessed Ranieri, 8, 172
 Raymond of Capua, 223–24, 228, 230, 233, 235, 238
 Renaldo di Gualtieri, 51
 Reverendino, Gaspare, 351
 Ricoveri, Niccolò, 163, 230, 243, 246, 248
 Ringhieri, Francesco, 54, 154, 323
 Riverside, Connecticut
 George A. Douglass collection
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Resurrection*, 142, 172; 142
 Rogier van der Weyden,
The Last Judgment, 47
 Romulus and Remus, 3, 38
 Rosini, Giovanni, 191
 Rosselli, Francesco, 243
 Rosselli, Lorenzo, 324
 Rossellino, Antonio, 55
 Rossellino, Bernardo, 3, 19, 256
 Rovarella, Niccolò, 55
 della Rovere, Girolamo Basso, Cardinal, 343

S

Salimbeni, Ambrogio, 266
 Salimbeni family, 37, 48, 50
 Salmon, Pierre, 4
 Salutati, Coluccio, 40–41
 San Gimignano
 Sant'Agostino, 149
 San Giovanni Valdarno

San Lorenzo, 105, 107n
 Sano d'Andrea, 26
 Sano di Pietro, cat. 15–25; 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, 23, 72, 95, 115, 126, 127, 138–67, 203, 207, 250, 302
 collaborations, 27, 106–7, 135–36, 139, 169
 depictions of Saint Bernardino by, 52, 105, 145, 164, 268
 devotional images of the Madonna and Child, 20, 87, 328, 332, 334
 and Francesco di Giorgio, 20, 316
 and the Franciscan Observants, 27, 138, 164
 and the Master of the Osservanza, 29–30, 99–100, 117, 130, 135–36, 139, 325
 miniatures and illuminations by, 139, 154–63, 243
 and Sassetta, 138, 142
 workshop of, 139, 270, 272
 Works by:
Annunciation altarpiece, 138
Antiphonary, illuminations, cat. 21; 90, 154, 158, 166; 154–157
The Assumption of the Virgin (Siena Pinacoteca), 149
The Birth and Naming of Saint John the Baptist, cat. 19; 152, 153; 152
 Cappella de'Signori, predella, cat. 18 a–c; 5, 138, 146–51, 152, 219, 265; 147–148, 150–151
The Assumption of the Virgin (Staatliches Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg), cat. 18 b; 17, 36, 145–46, 149; 150
The Birth of the Virgin, cat. 18 a; 36, 146, 148–49; 148
The Virgin Returning to the House of Her Parents, cat. 18 c; 146, 150–51, 267; 151
The Coronation of the Virgin (with Domenico di Bartolo), 37, 43, 138, 141, 250; 141
 Gesuati altarpiece, 54, 107, 128, 130, 133, 136, 138, 141, 142, 158, 163; 55
The Flagellation of Saint Jerome, 117, 130, 158
The Initial A, with The Vision of Isaiah, cat. 23 a; 161, 163; 160
The Initial D, with David Seated on a Throne, cat. 23 c; 163; 162
The Initial D, with The Last Judgment, cat. 23 b; 161, 163; 161
The Initial D, with The Torture of Saint Agatha, cat. 22; 158; 159
The Initial M, with The Annunciation, 163; 163
Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels, and Saints Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret, Francis, and Bernardino, 164; 164
Madonna of Humility (Brooklyn Museum), cat. 15; 139, 141; 140
Madonna of Humility (Museo Civico, Montalcino), 87–88, 139; 87
Madonna of Mercy, cat. 17; 145; 146
The Nativity, 166–67, 321; 167
Orationes (Cicero): illuminations, 34, 139

- Sano di Pietro (*continued*)
The Penitent Jerome (Siena Pinacoteca), 54
Pietà, 138
The Resurrection, cat. 16; 128, 135, 142; 143
Saint Bernardino Preaching before the Church of San Francesco, 42; 41
Saint Bernardino Preaching in the Campo, 42; 41
Saint Bernardino predella, cat. 24 a–b; 11, 21, 41, 164–66, 223; 165
A Possessed Woman Is Exorcised, cat. 24 b; 11, 166; 165
Saint Bernardino Resuscitating a Drowned Child, cat. 24 a; 11, 164, 166, 223, 281; 165
Saint Bernardino Restoring a Child to Life, cat. 20; 11, 41, 153–54, 223, 281; 153
Saint George Baptizing the King of Silena, 29–30; 29
Saint George Preaching to the King of Silena, 29–30; 29
Saint George Slaying the Dragon (with the Master of the Osservanza), 29–30; 28–29
Saint Jerome in Penitence, 133
San Quirico d'Orcia altarpiece, 128, 135, 149
Scrofiano altarpiece (with Giovanni di Paolo), 27–28, 145, 152
The Virgin Imploring Calixtus III to Aid Siena, 40, 138; 40
Sanesdoni, Blessed Ambrogio, cat. 38 m; 241–42; 241
Santi, Giovanni, 22, 33
Sassetta, cat. 1–5; 12, 46, 63–90, 137, 250, 270, 272, 307
collaboration with other artists, 29, 107
and Flemish art, 51
and Florentine art, 5–11
and Franciscan Observant movement, 52
and Franco-Flemish illuminations, 83
and the Master of the Osservanza, 63, 83, 99–100, 102, 106–7, 126–28, 133
influence on Saint Anthony Abbot series, 106, 107
and Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio, 91–92, 95, 97–98
and Sano di Pietro, 138, 142
and Taddeo di Bartolo's *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 43
use of silver, 21
Works by:
The Adoration of the Magi, cat. 2 b; 4, 80, 83, 107, 115; 80–82
Arte della Lana altarpiece, cat. 1 a–f; 5, 8, 37, 64–67, 83, 88, 90, 95, 98, 104–5, 108, 117, 127, 254; 65–68, 70–71, 73, 75–76, 78–79
The Burning of a Heretic, cat. 1 e; 31, 75–77, 127; 76
The Institution of the Eucharist, cat. 1 d; 65–66, 74–75, 77, 88; 75
A Miracle of the Sacrament, cat. 1 c; 8, 31, 72–74; 73
The Prophet Elijah, 65, 66; 65
The Prophet Elisha, 65, 66
Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils, cat. 1 f; 65, 78–79, 104, 107, 117; 78–79
Saint Thomas Aquinas in Prayer, cat. 1 b; 21, 71–72, 77, 95, 127; 70
The Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas, cat. 1 a; 21, 66, 69, 77, 170; 68
Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, 8, 10, 15, 63, 80, 83, 84, 88, 90, 95, 102, 127–28, 128n, 136, 172, 272
The Crucified Christ Adored by Saint Francis, 90, 272
The Funeral of Saint Francis, 123
Madonna and Child with Six Angels, 84
The Mystic Marriage of Saint Francis, 83
Saint Augustine, cat. 3; 84; 85
Saint Francis in Glory, 10, 22, 30; 9
The Soul of the Miser of Citeria, 8; 8
Cortona altarpiece, 92
The Journey of the Magi, cat. 2 a; 4, 80, 115; 80–81
Madonna and Child (Grosseto), 95
Madonna and Child with Angels (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), cat. 4; 7, 87–88, 139; 86
Madonna and Child with Angels (Siena Pinacoteca), 7, 31n; 6
Madonna of Humility, 87; 87
Madonna of the Snow, 5–8, 13, 45–46, 63, 65, 78, 80, 84, 92, 95, 98, 108, 115, 138, 175, 178; 6
Roman Missal (attributed to Sassetta), cat. 5; 88, 90, 154; 90
San Martino crucifix, 88, 90; 89
Saint Martin and the Beggar, 7, 111; 7
Savini, Savino, 23, 25
Saviozzo, 46
Scheggia (Giovanni di Ser Giovanni), 107n, 268
Segna da Bonaventura, 211
Ser Cristoforo d'Andrea, 43
Servite order, 169, 353
Sforza, Caterina, 57
Sforza, Francesco, 36
Peter Jay Sharp collection
Giovanni di Paolo: *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, cat. 33 c; 203; 202
Sibyls, cat. 77; 56, 358–59; 359
Siena, 3–58
Archivio di Stato
Francesco di Giorgio: *The Virgin Protecting Siena*, 3; 2
Baptistery, 20, 45, 242, 300
baptismal font, 35, 37, 38, 46, 111, 138, 158; 35
Donatello: *The Banquet of Herod*, 279, 281; 279
Ghiberti's work on, 35
Giovanni di Paolo: *Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist*, 215–16, 218; 216
interior of, 35; 35
Pietro Orioli: *Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles*, 26, 335, 337; 26
Vecchietta: Apostles' Creed frescoes, 194
Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati
Giovanni di Paolo and Unidentified artist: *Antiphonary*, cat. 30; 53, 181, 188–89, 212; 180, 182–187
Liberale da Verona: *Roman Missal*, cat. 56; 293; 292
Sassetta (attributed to): *Roman Missal*, cat. 5; 88, 90, 154; 90
Camollia gate
lost fresco of *The Assumption*, 36, 52
Cathedral, 5, 17, 36, 124, 264
choir book illuminations for, 23, 25, 158, 243, 289, 291, 293
Giovanni di Stefano: *Hermes Trismegistus*, pavement, 56–57; 56
inlaid pavement, 56–57, 63, 358; 56
Opera del Duomo and operai, 43–46
Piccolomini Chapel, 57
Pinturicchio: Piccolomini Library, frescoes, 57–58
San Callisto Chapel
Donatello: *Madonna and Child with Cherubim*, 13, 16, 20; 15
San Crescenzo Chapel, 45
Sano di Pietro: *Saint Bernardino Preaching before the Church of San Francesco*, 42; 41
Sano di Pietro: *Saint Bernardino Preaching in the Campo*, 42; 41
Sant'Ansano Chapel, 5, 45, 108
Simone Martini: *The Annunciation*, 4
dedication and devotion to the Virgin Mary, 3, 27, 36, 39, 52, 149
early-14th-century art, 34–36
Fonte Gaia, 11, 252, 351
commission and contract for, 38, 43, 46
Study for the Fonte Gaia, 38
Loggia della Mercanzia, 16, 46, 58
love of pageantry and luxury, 20–21
Monte dei Paschi, 65
Chigi-Saracini Collection
Giovanni di Paolo: *Madonna and Child*, 176; 176
Master of the Osservanza: *Pietà*, 99; 113
Sassetta: *The Adoration of the Magi*, cat. 2 b; 4, 80, 83, 107, 115; 80, 82
Sassetta: Crucifix, 80, 90; 89
Sassetta: *Saint Martin and the Beggar*, 7; 7
Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
Duccio: *Maestà*, 5–7
Matteo di Giovanni: *Madonna and Child* (Baptistery altarpiece), 20, 21, 270; 21
Pietro Lorenzetti: *The Birth of the Virgin*, 4, 72, 124, 148–49; 72
Sano di Pietro: *Antiphonary*, 158
Sassetta (?): *Madonna and Child* (from Basciano), 88n
myth of Roman origins, 3, 38–39, 46, 55–56
and narrative painting, 30–31
Palazzo Pubblico, 7, 18, 36, 51, 78–79, 105
Ambrogio Lorenzetti: *Good and Bad Government*, 3–4, 13, 36, 249, 255

Siena (continued)

- Ambrogio Lorenzetti: *Mappamondo*, 196
- Cappella de' Signori altarpiece and choir stalls, 5, 146, 166; 39
- Domenico Beccafumi: Sala del Concistoro, frescoes, 58
- Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori: choir stalls, 194, 196; 196
- and feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, 149
- Jacopo della Quercia: *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, 193; 194
- Neroccio de' Landi: *A Possessed Woman Is Exorcised*, 166
- Sala del Biado, 40, 42
- Vecchietta: *Madonna of Mercy*, 42; 43
- Sala del Mappamondo, 16
- Vecchietta: *Saint Catherine of Siena*, 13, 16; 16
- and Sano di Pietro, 138
- Simone Martini: *Maestà*, 4
- Taddeo di Bartolo: frescoes, 39–40, 147, 175; 39
- Uffizio della Biccherna
- Domenico di Bartolo and Sano di Pietro: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 27, 138, 141, 250; 141
- Piazza del Campo, 4–5, 111, 193, 268; *See also* Fonte Gaia
- Saint Bernardino preaching in, 36, 42, 164; 41
- Pinacoteca Nazionale
- Ambrogio Lorenzetti: *Allegory of Redemption*, 79
- Bartolo di Fredi: *The Adoration of the Magi*, 80; 83
- Benvenuto di Giovanni: *Ascension altarpiece*, 300, 302, 305–6, 311, 315; 306
- Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna of Humility*, 13, 52; 13
- Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna of Mercy*, cat. 42; 145, 254–57; 254–255
- Francesco di Giorgio: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 12, 23, 321–22; 24, 321
- Giovanni di Paolo: *The Flight into Egypt*, 11; 12
- Giovanni di Paolo: *The Last Judgment*, 194, 200
- Giovanni di Paolo: *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter Damian, Thomas the Apostle, Clare, and Ursula*, 204; 205
- Giovanni di Paolo: *The Presentation in the Temple* (Colle di Val d'Elsa), 210; 209
- Giovanni di Paolo: *The Purification of the Virgin*, 218–22; 220
- Guido da Siena, follower of: *Saint Francis, with Scenes from His Life*, 104; 106
- Matteo di Giovanni: *Madonna of the Snow*, 12, 19; 19
- Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio: *Saint Bernardino*, 42; 42

- Pietro Lorenzetti: *The Dream of Sogno*, 69; 69
- Sano di Pietro: *Gesuati altarpiece*, 54; 55
- Sano di Pietro: *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels, and Saints Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret, Francis, and Bernardino*, 164; 164
- Sano di Pietro: *Scroflano altarpiece*, predella, 29
- Sano di Pietro: *The Virgin Imploring Calixtus III to Aid Siena*, 40, 138; 40
- Sassetta: *Arte della Lana altarpiece*, panels, 65
- Sassetta: *Four Church Fathers: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory*, 65; 66
- Sassetta: *Four Patron Saints: Victor, Ansano, Savino, and Crescenzo*, 65; 66
- Sassetta: *The Institution of the Eucharist*, cat. 1 d; 65–66, 74–75, 77; 75
- Sassetta: *Landscapes* (fragments), 65, 79; 67
- Sassetta: *Madonna and Child with Angels*, 7; 6
- Sassetta: *The Prophet Elijah*, 65; 65
- Sassetta: *Saint Anthony Beaten by Devils*, cat. 1 f; 65, 78–79, 104, 107, 117; 78–79
- Vecchietta: *Arliquiera*, 27, 42, 91, 128, 135, 217, 222–23, 241–42, 258; 42
- public art and government commissions, 34, 37–43, 57
- public art and private patrons, 45, 57–58
- San Cristoforo
- Master of the Osservanza and Sano di Pietro: *Saint George Slaying the Dragon*, 29–30, 45, 99; 28–29
- San Domenico, 21, 169, 174, 192, 223–24, 230, 235
- Francesco di Giorgio: *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 30, 316
- Matteo di Giovanni: *Placidi altarpiece*, cat. 49 a–c; 19–20, 274–78; 274–277
- San Francesco, 3, 18, 63, 75, 105, 171, 176
- Fondi Chapel, 176, 178
- Martinozzi Chapel, 105, 261–62
- and Saint Bernardino's sermons, 26, 36, 42; 41
- San Giovanni Battista della Morte, 216, 217
- San Girolamo, 142
- San Pietro Ovile
- Matteo di Giovanni and Giovanni di Pietro: *Annunciation altarpiece*, 4, 19, 265–68; 265–267
- Sant'Agostino, 25, 102
- Bichi Chapel, 26, 34, 46, 316, 327, 335
- Luca Signorelli: *altarpiece*, 25, 340–43; 341–343
- Sant'Andrea
- Giovanni di Paolo: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 203–4; 203
- Sant'Eugenio (Benedictine monastery), 304, 306, 306n
- Santa Bonda, convent, 54

- Santa Maria dei Servi, 3, 20
- Bernardino Fungai: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 352–53; 353
- Santa Maria della Scala
- Spedale, 26, 33, 36, 111, 149, 154, 189, 218, 264
- Ambrogio Lorenzetti: *The Birth of the Virgin*, 152
- Giovanni di Paolo: *Pizzicaiuoli altarpiece*; *See also* Giovanni di Paolo, *Saint Catherine of Siena series*
- involvement in the San Pietro Ovile altarpiece, 265–66
- Master of Saint Ansanus: choir book illuminations for, 178
- official commissions, 46
- Pellegrinaio
- fresco cycle, 13–15, 36, 47–50, 139, 188, 249, 252, 255, 266, 268
- Domenico di Bartolo: *The Building of the Hospital*, 49; 51
- Domenico di Bartolo: *The Care of the Sick*, 14, 48; 14, 48
- Domenico di Bartolo: *The Feeding of the Poor*, 48–50; 49
- Domenico di Bartolo: *Pope Celestine III Granting the Hospital Privileges*, 14, 48; 14, 51
- Domenico di Bartolo: *The Raising of Foundlings*, 48, 139; 49, 139
- Domenico di Bartolo: *The Reception of Pilgrims and the Distribution of Alms*, 48; 48
- Priamo della Quercia: *The Rector Invested with the Augustinian Habit*, 48–49; 50
- Vecchietta: *Allegory of the Origins of the Spedale della Scala*, 15, 48; 50
- general view of, 47
- Pellegrino di Mariano: choir book illuminations for, 243, 246, 248
- Reliquary Chapel
- Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna of Mercy*, cat. 42; 14, 145, 254–57; 254–255
- Vecchietta: *The Annunciation and The Nativity*, 259, 261; 261
- Vecchietta: *Apostles' Creed frescoes*, 51, 194, 196; 53
- Sano di Pietro: choir book illuminations for, 158–63
- Simone Martini: *Life of the Virgin*, frescoes, 4, 150, 151
- association with Vecchietta, 258–59
- Vecchietta: *bronze ciborium for the high altar*, 58, 230, 259, 276
- Vecchietta (with Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio): *Arliquiera*, 27, 42, 91, 128, 135, 217, 222–23, 241–42, 258; 42
- takeover by the commune, 43, 46–47
- wealth and fame, 46–48
- Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, 33, 40, 47, 249–50, 256
- Signorelli, Luca, cat. 74; 25, 34, 327, 335, 340–43

Signorelli, Luca (*continued*)

influence on the Master of the Griselda
Legend and on Pietro di Domenico,
344–47

Works by:

Annunciation altarpiece (Volterra), 342
Belladonna altarpiece (Volterra), 342–43
Bichi altarpiece, cat. 74; 58, 340–43,
344, 347, 352; 341–343
The Last Judgment (San Brizio Chapel,
Orvieto Cathedral), 340, 347
*The Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of
Alexandria*, cat. 74; 342–43; 342–
343
Pentecost, 343
The Resurrection of the Dead, 347
Santuario della Santa Casa (Loreto),
frescoes, 342, 347

Silvestrine order, 211–12, 240

Simone Martini, 4–5, 11, 13, 27, 35, 130,
146–48, 148*n*, 207, 241, 266, 334

in Avignon, 22

collaboration with Lippo Memmi, 27

Ghiberti's praise of, 4, 35

and International Gothic style, 4

and the Master of the Osservanza, 111

and Sassetta, 63, 83, 84

Works by:

The Annunciation, 4, 36, 45, 108, 265
Blessed Agostino Novello altarpiece,
207, 223
Guidoriccio da Fogliano, 90
Maestà, 4
Saint Louis of Toulouse, 7
*The Virgin Returning to the House of
Her Parents*, 150–51
The Way to Calvary, 174

Sinalunga

San Bernardino

Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Annun-
ciation*, 23, 300, 302, 304; 23

Guidoccio Cozzarelli: altarpieces, 282

Soderini, Francesco, 252

Soderini, Niccolò, 252

Sodoma, 340

The Decapitation of Niccolò Tuldo, 343

Solari, Andrea, 57

Sozzini, Mariano, 34

Spannocchi, Ambrogio, 19

Spannocchi, Antonio and Giulio, 25, 344

Spannocchi wedding, panels celebrating, 58,
335, 339, 344, 347; *See also* Francesco

di Giorgio; Master of the Griselda
Legend; Neroccio de'Landi;

Pietro Orioli

Stefano di Luigi da Milano, 293

Story, William Wetmore, 219

Strasbourg

Musée des Beaux-Arts

Bernardino Fungai: *The Conversion of
Saint Clement*, cat. 76 a; 354; 355

Bernardino Fungai: *The Reunion of
Saint Clement with His Family*,
cat. 76 b; 354; 355

Suida-Manning collection

Matteo di Giovanni: *Saint Bernardino Re-
storing a Child to Life*, cat. 50 b; 20,
281; 280–281

T

Taccola, Mariano, 33

Taddeo di Bartolo, 56, 65, 99, 168, 172, 175,
212, 242

Works by:

The Coronation of the Virgin, 43
Montepulciano altarpiece, 87, 128*n*
Palazzo Pubblico, frescoes, 38–40, 46,
58, 147; 39

Tavelli, Giovanni, 54

Thomas Aquinas, Saint, 65, 67, 69–72, 193, 196

Thomas the Apostle, Saint, 204–5

Tolomei, Giorgio, 29, 45, 136

Tolomei, Jacopo, 34, 46

Tommasi, Giugurta, 33

Tommaso da Celano, 205, 207

Torrita

Spedale Maestri

Donatello: *The Blood of the Redeemer*,
13, 17–18; 18

Toscani, Giovanni, 262–63

Trajan, 356–57

Tura, Cosimo, 55

di Turino, Giovanni and Lorenzo

statue of the she-wolf, 38, 39

U

Ubertino da Casale, 171

Uccello, Paolo, 73, 77

San Martino alla Scala (Florence), fresco,
209

Ugolino da Siena, 22, 128

Santa Croce altarpiece, 135

Umbrian painting, influence of, 25–26

Unknown Siennese Painter

The Initial P, with Saint John the Baptist,
cat. 14; 137; 137

Urban V, Pope, 142

Urban VI, Pope, 238

Urbano da Cortona, 19, 33, 46

Urbano di Pietro del Bello, 243, 261

Urbino

and Francesco di Giorgio, 22, 327

Utrecht

Rijksmuseum Het Catherijneconvent

Giovanni di Paolo: *The Crucifixion*,
cat. 38. k; 219–20, 240; 240

V

Valerius Maximus, 58

Vanni, Domenico di, 44

Vasari, Giorgio, 291, 299

Vatican City

Vatican Museums

contemporary of Sano di Pietro (Pelle-
grino di Mariano ?): series of *Life of
the Virgin*, 150–51, 267

Giovanni di Paolo: *Christ in the Gar-
den of Gethsemane*, 174; 174

Giovanni di Paolo: *The Deposition*,
174–75; 175

Master of the Osservanza: *The Flagella-
tion of Christ*, cat. 12 a; 126–27,
128, 130, 133; 129

Sano di Pietro: *Saint George Baptizing
the King of Silena*, 29–30; 29

Sano di Pietro: *Saint George Preaching
to the King of Silena*, 29–30; 29

Sassetta: *Madonna of Humility*, 88; 87

Sassetta: *The Vision of Saint Thomas
Aquinas*, cat. 1 a; 66, 69, 77, 170;
68

Vecchietta, cat. 43–44; 19–20, 34, 168, 172,
194, 196, 219, 250, 256, 258–63, 265,
278, 328

association with the Spedale di Santa Maria
della Scala, 258–59

and Benvenuto di Giovanni, 300, 302

collaboration with other artists, 27, 91,
139

and Donatello, 15–18, 258–59

and Giovanni di Pietro, 264

and Masolino, 15, 258

use of archaeological and architectural de-
tails, 15, 127, 258

use of classical motifs, 55

work for Cardinal Branda Castiglione, 22,
258

Works by:

The Annunciation and The Nativity,
259, 261; 261

Apostles' Creed frescoes (Spedale della
Scala), 51, 194, 196; 53

Arliquiera (with Pietro di Giovanni
d'Ambrogio), 27, 42, 91, 128, 135,
217, 222–23, 241–42, 258; 42

Assumption of the Virgin altarpiece,
16–18, 259; 17

biccherna and *gabella* covers, 258–59

bronze ciborium (Siena Cathedral, high
altar), 58, 230, 259, 276

*The Burial and The Assumption of the
Virgin*, 259

Castiglione Olona frescoes, 258, 263

The Flagellation, 259

The Lamentation, cat. 44; 15, 105, 258,
261–63; 262

Madonna of Mercy (Palazzo Pubblico),
42, 145, 242; 43

The Nativity, cat. 43; 259, 261, 321; 260

Pietà, 263

The Resurrection, 17–18, 259, 322; 18

The Risen Christ, 16

Saint Catherine of Siena, 13, 16, 42,
223; 16

Solomon in the Temple, 128

Spedale della Scala frescoes

*An Allegory of the Origins of the
Spedale della Scala*, 15, 48; 50

in Reliquary Chapel, 51, 194,
196; 53

statue of Saint Anthony Abbot, 259

statue of Saint Bernardino, 259

statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, 16

The Way to Calvary, 311

Verocchio, 327

Vico di Luca, 29, 100, 107; *See also* Master
of the Osservanza

Villani, Filippo, 41

Villani, Giovanni, 38, 55
 Vincenti, Blessed Francesco, 54
 Virgin Mary
 and the Carmelites, 65, 67
 and the feast of the Purification, 218–22
 and 14th-century Sienese art, 27, 36, 52, 87
 and Sienese artists, 36
 Visconti family, 37
 Visconti, Filippo Maria, Duke of Milan, 22, 41, 91
 Visconti, Francesco, 45, 47
 Visconti, Gian Galeazzo, 47, 105
 Visconti, Giovanni Maria, 168
 Volterra
 San Girolamo
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *Annunciation*
 altarpiece, 300

W

Washington, D.C.
 National Gallery of Art
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Agony in the Garden*, cat. 62 a; 304–7; 307
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Crucifix-*

ion, cat. 62 c; 305–6, 311; 310
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Descent into Limbo*, cat. 62 d; 304, 306, 311; 312
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Resurrection*, cat. 62 e; 304–6, 311; 313
 Benvenuto di Giovanni: *The Way to Calvary*, cat. 62 b; 304–6, 308, 311; 308–309
 Domenico di Bartolo: *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints Peter and Paul*, cat. 40; 92, 250; 251
 Francesco di Giorgio: *God the Father Surrounded by Angels*, cat. 65 a; 321–22; 320
 Giovanni di Paolo: *The Annunciation, with The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, 191; 191
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Funeral of Saint Anthony*, cat. 10 h; 123; 122
 Master of the Osservanza: *The Journey and Meeting of Saint Anthony with Saint Paul the Hermit*, cat. 10 g; 120, 123; 121
 Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony Blessed by an Old Hermit*, cat. 10 c; 111, 113; 112

Master of the Osservanza: *Saint Anthony Distributing His Wealth*, cat. 10 b; 102, 111; 110
 Matteo di Giovanni: *Madonna and Child, with Saints Jerome and Catherine of Alexandria and Two Angels*, cat. 48; 20, 272, 274; 273
 Neroccio de'Landi: *Portrait of a Lady*, 13, 31n
 Williamstown, Massachusetts
 Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
 Luca Signorelli: *The Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, cat. 74 a; 342–43; 342–343
 Wycliffe, John, 66, 76–77

Y

York
 City Art Gallery
 Bernardino Fungai: *The Martyrdom of Saint Clement*, cat. 76 d; 357–58; 357
 Bernardino Fungai: *Saint Clement Striking the Rock*, cat. 76 c; 356; 356

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